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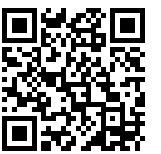

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THE TYRANT

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THE TYRANT

(TIRANO BANDERAS)

A NOVEL OF WARM LANDS

BY

RAMÓN DEL VALLE-INCLÁN

NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM THE SPANISH
BY MARGARITA PAVITT

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PROLOGUE

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PROLOGUE

I

FILOMENO CUEVAS, a Creole ranchman, had planned to arm his gangs of peons that night with the muskets hidden in the jungle, and bands of Indians were advancing in scattered files across the plains of Ticomaipú. A bright moon. Nocturnal horizons, deep with murmurs and echoes.

II

Galloping out to Jarote Quemado with a squad of overseers, the ranchman reined his horse and by the light of a lantern called the roll:

"Manuel Romero."

"Present!"

"Step forward. I just want to warn you not to go getting drunk. The first stroke of twelve will be the signal. Many lives depend upon you. Enough said. Shake hands!"

"Master, we're old veterans at this kind of fracas."

The ranchman went on with the roll-call:

"Benito San Juan."

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"Present!"

"I suppose Chino Viejo has given you your orders?"

"Chino Viejo told me I was to bust into the fairgrounds with a squad of horsemen and send it all skyhigh—fire off a few shots and mop up the place. Nothing more difficult than that."

"At twelve o'clock!"

"At the first stroke. I'll be quartered under the cathedral belfry."

"You have to be pretty smooth about this and up to the last minute pretend you're only taking in the fair."

"Leave it to us."

"See that you get away with it. Shake hands!"

The master fixed his gaze upon the paper held in the luminous cone of the lantern:

"Atilio Palmieri."

"Here."

Atilio Palmieri was a cousin of the ranch mistress: fair, stocky, petulant. The ranchman tugged at his goat-like whiskers:

"Atilio, I've got a very risky job for you."

"I appreciate the favor, cousin!"

"Study out the best way of setting fire to a convent. Drive the whole pack of nuns hollering out into the street in their shifts. Don't let your men start drinking. You have to strike a sharp blow and keep your wits about you. Good luck, Atilio! Try to carry out your mission round about midnight."

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"I'm your man, Filomeno!"

"So I trust. Zacarías San José!"

"Present."

"I've got no special job for you. I leave it to your judgment to do whatever may be most convenient. What sort of fracas could you start with a group of men tonight in Sante Fe?"

"With just one dependable pal I'd smash up the fair. I'd knock over the shack of the wild animals and open the cages. What do you say, master? Wouldn't that be a hell of a row? If I had five good fellows I'd set fire to all the grocery-stores of the *Gachupines*.* With twenty-five I'd overpower the guard at Mostenses."

"Is that all you can offer?"

"I'm pretty sure I could give Tyrant Banderas a bleeding. Chief, here in this knapsack you see on my saddletree are the remains of my baby. Eaten up by the hogs in the quagmire! Thanks to lugging these remains I won enough at cards to buy me a nag at the fair, and I lassoed a *Gachupín* and escaped safe and sound from under the fire of the gendarmes. Tonight I'll get away with anything I attempt!"

"Scarface, take what men you need and carry out that pretty program. Good-bye. Shake hands. And after tonight bury those remains. Courage and wits are the best mascots in war. Shake hands!"

* A term of disrespect applied to the Spaniard in Spanish America.

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"Master, this fair's going to be something to remember!"

"So I hope. Crisanto Roa!"

"Present."

He was the last on the list and the master blew out the lantern. The gangs of peons renewed their march in the moonlight.

III

Colonel de la Gándara, a deserter from the Federal militia, was criticizing the ranchman's military preparations with scoffing chicanery:

"Filomeno, don't be a fool and bite off more than you can chew. It's a pretty serious responsibility you're taking upon yourself in leading your peons to the slaughter. You want to play the general and you can't even understand a plan of battle! Now I understand military tactics; I'm a graduate of the Military Academy. Doesn't your common-sense tell you which one of us should take command? Can you be so blinded by your pride and so daring in your ignorance?"

"Domiciano, war can't be learned in books. It's all a matter of being born to it."

"So you think you're another Napoleon?"

"Who knows!"

"Filomeno, quit your kidding!"

"Domiciano, convince me that you've got a plan of battle that can beat the one I've worked out, and I'll

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hand over the command to you. Now what would you do with two hundred men?"

"Increase the number till I'd formed an army."

"How would you go about it?"

"By levying troops in the mountain villages. In these warmer districts the revolution has few adherents."

"Is that what you'd do?"

"Along general lines, yes. The mountains must be the field of action. The plains are for great armies, but guerrillas and other light troops find the mountains their best ally. Now that's scientific, and since war has existed the topography of the country has determined the manœuvre. Two hundred men on the plains would inevitably be wiped out."

"So you advise us to take to the mountains?"

"That's it. Hunt around for a natural fortress that will make up for the deficiency of numbers."

"Very well. That's scientific; that's the doctrine of the treatise, the teaching of the academies! . . . All right! But I'm not scientific, nor have I written any treatise, nor graduated from any military academy. Your plan of campaign does not appeal to me, Domiciano. Now as you know, I've planned to strike at Santa Fe tonight, I've been thinking it over for a long time, and it just happens that there's a schooner docked in the river for unloading. I'll embark my men and land them on the beach at Punta Serpientes. I'll sur-

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prise the guard of the fortress, arm the prisoners, and incite the garrison of the Citadel to revolt. The sergeants are already won over. Now that's my plan, Domiciano."

"But you're staking everything on one throw. I see you're no emulator of Fabius Maximus. Where's your plan of retreat? You forget that a good commander never imprudently exposes himself, but attacks with a previous knowledge of his lines of retreat. That's the most elemental of Fabian tactics. On our plains, the man who fights in retreat, if he's agile in the manœuvre and knows how to handle the petroleum torch, will conquer the Hannibals and Napoleons. Filomeno, the guerrilla warfare of the revolutionists can follow no other tactics than that of the Roman against the Carthaginian. That's that!"

"Very eloquent!"

"You're an irresponsible fellow that's leading a handful of men to the slaughter!"

"Audacity and luck are what win a campaign, and not the mathematics of the academies. How did the heroes of our War of Independence proceed?"

"Like apostles. Heroes of popular legend, not great strategists. Simón Bolívar, the first of them all, was a rotten general. War is a matter of scientific technique, and here you go turning it into a game of roulette!"

"Just that."

"Well then, you reason like an idiot!"

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"Perhaps so. I'm not scientific, and so I'm forced to follow my hunch. I'm going to Santa Fe for the head of General Banderas!"

"You're more likely to lose your own."

"That we shall see. Time will tell."

"You're attempting operations with no consideration of tactics—a mere bandits' skirmish, contrary to all military science. It's your duty to subordinate yourself to the General Staff of the Revolutionary Army, to be a mere cog in the wheel. You're committing a breach of discipline when you act independently. You're overproud, and you're ambitious. You won't listen to me. Do what you please, then! Sacrifice your peons! On top of their sweat you demand their blood. Very well!"

"I've fought it all out in my own conscience, and in spite of the burden and responsibilities, I stick to my decision. My hunch is stronger than any reasoning."

"You mean the wish to distinguish yourself."

"Domiciano, you can't understand me. I want to extinguish this war at one blow, as you puff out a candle."

"And if you fail, you'll spread discouragement in the ranks of your comrades and set a bad example."

"Or one to emulate."

"Perhaps for the children of the public schools a hundred years from now. But the present hasn't yet become history and it has a more realistic outlook.

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Well, anyway, so much talking makes you dry. Hand over your canteen."

He took a swallow, struck fire with his tinder-box, and relit his cigar, scattering the ash upon a belly rotund as that of a Tibetan idol.

IV

Through morass and mangrove swamps, the ranchman marched his force of only fifty men until he came within sight of a small schooner tied up for unloading at the dock of a saw-mill. Filomeno ordered the pilot to set sail for Punta Serpientes. The luminous disc of a lighthouse revolved on the horizon. All embarked and the schooner glided silently from her berth. The moon sailed over the rigging to port: a staunch ship on a glittering sea. The prow flung up jets of silver spray, and in the shadow of the jib a negro was surrounding himself with a circle of listeners as he recited verses with lyric enthusiasm and liquid lisp. Divided in mess, the members of the faction dealt out the cards. From scuttle and orlop oily lanterns kept watch upon the progress of the games. And in the shadow of the jib the black savant poured forth the lyric flowering of his lisping eloquence:

"Thail on thtout thip acroth the thea,
No enemy craft can harm thee;
No thtorm nor calm thy route can alter
Nor make thy iron valor falter."

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PART ONE

SYMPHONY OF THE TROPICS

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BOOK ONE

THE ICON OF THE TYRANT

I

SANTA FE DE TIERRA FIRME: Sandy wastes, agaves, prickly pears and mangrove swamps—called in the old maps Punta de las Serpientes.

II

On a hillock, amid pomegranate-trees and palms, facing the vast ocean and the setting sun, gleamed the round, tiled, Colonial cupolas of San Martín de los Mostenses. The bayonet of a sentinel flashed in the bell-less tower. San Martín de los Mostenses, that dismantled monastery from whence a distant revolution had expelled the monks, had become through the vicissitudes of time the Military Headquarters of President Don Santos Banderas—Tyrant Banderas.

III

The General had just got back with a few platoons of Indians from executing the insurgents of Zamalpoa.

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Standing in profile in a distant window, motionless and taciturn, attent upon the relief of guard in the ruddy yard of the monastery, he resembles a death's-head with smoked spectacles and clerical stock. He had fought against the Spaniards in Peru, and in those campaigns had formed the habit of chewing coca, by grace of which the corners of his mouth continually drooled a thin stream of green poison. Stationed in the distant window with the immobility of a sacred crow, he watches the squads of Indians, stolid in their cruel indifference to suffering and death. Half-breed wenches flit up and down the lines, fumbling in their pockets, amongst the medals of saints and scraps of food, for a few crumbs of tobacco or a penny to give their men. A colored balloon gleams in the turquoise sky above the yard, invaded by the purple shadow of the monastery. Some of the soldiers, Comalte Indians of the forests, raised their gaze. Santa Fe was celebrating its famous fairs of All-Saints and All-Souls. Tyrant Banderas, ensconced in the distant window, was the very image of a crazy owl.

IV

Down the great monastic hall tramped a squad of soldiers, with bayonets fixed on their black muskets, conducting between their files a frowsy ragamuffin with blood-stained face. At their head, on the right flank, flashed the sword of Major Abilio del Valle. The inky scrawl of his moustache lent a fierce relief to

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the wolfish snarl of his teeth above the chin-strap of his broad-brimmed hat, adorned with a silver band:

"Halt!"

The squad drew up before the windows of the monastery. Two corporals, each wearing a cow-hide lash with iron rings crossed on his breast like a cartridge-belt, stepped out of the ranks and stripped the culprit of his squalid sheet. With docile obedience, the coppery delinquent got in the pit, three feet deep, as ordained by the Code of Military Discipline. The two corporals filled up the hole and stamped the earth down about him until he was buried up to his quivering hips. The naked torso, the frowsy head, the hands in irons, projected from the pit replete with dark, dramatic expression. He pressed his beard against his breast and furtively eyed the corporals as they ungirded themselves of the lashes. There was a roll of drums and then began the classic discipline of the strap:

"One! Two! Three!"

Without a murmur the frowsy culprit arched his back over the manacled hands pressed against his breast. Streams of blood gushed from his sides while, keeping time with the rhythm of the drum, the two corporals sang out:

"Seven! Eight! Nine!"

V

Don Santos left his post in the window to receive a delegation from the Spanish Colony, dressed in their

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Sunday best. The grocer, the pawnbroker, the blatant politician, the unlicensed doctor, the fortune-hunter, the rowdy journalist, all stood bowing in a row before the taciturn mummy whose mouth drooled green saliva. Don Celes Galindo, rotund, pompous, and pedantic, took the floor and with fawning hyperbolism saluted the glorious pacificator of Zamalpoa:

"The Spanish Colony does homage to that meritorious patrician, rare example of energy and virtue, who has accomplished the task of restoring the reign of order by inflicting a salutary punishment upon the revolutionary demagogues. The noble and magnanimous Spanish Colony dedicate a prayer and a tear to those victims of an untoward delusion, of a perturbing virus. But at the same time the Spanish Colony cannot but recognize that in the inflexible enforcement of the laws lies the one safeguard of order and prosperity in the Republic."

The row of *Gachupines* murmured their approval. Some of them were florid, strapping rustics; others wore the captious, unhealthy look of the old shopkeeper; and others again, round-bellied and bejeweled, exuded a clumsy pedantry. But the awkwardness of their gloved hands stamped all alike with a certain family resemblance. Tyrant Banderas mumbled the studied phrases of a dominie:

"It is with satisfaction that I observe how my broth-

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ers of race established in this country, reaffirming their unshakable faith in the ideals of order and progress, respond to the traditions of the Mother Country. This moral support of the Spanish Colony is a source of great satisfaction to me. Santos Banderas has none of that thirst of power which his adversaries criticize in him. Santos Banderas assures you that it will be the happiest day of his life when he can retire from public life and sink into obscurity to work his strip of land, like Cincinnatus. Believe me, my friends, the duties of the Presidency are a very heavy burden for an old man. An executive frequently has to disregard the dictates of his heart, for in the enforcement of the law lies the safeguard of honest and industrious citizens. Faced with the necessity of signing a death-warrant, an executive may feel his eyes fill with tears, but his hand must not tremble. This tragedy of the executive is, as I have just been saying, too heavy a burden for an old man. In the presence of such loyal friends I can confess my weakness: I assure you it was with a bleeding heart that I signed the death-sentences of Zamalpoa. It's three nights I've not closed my eyes!"

"Oh, boy!"

The line of *Gachupines* wavered as their bunioned feet, encased in patent-leather, shifted from one flagstone to another. The clumsy gloved hands moved about uneasily in search of a resting place, till at last with tacit accord the *Gachupines* took refuge in toying

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with their Brazilian watch-chains. The mummy stressed his statement:

"Three days and nights without a wink nor a bite to eat!"

"Whaddaya know about that!"

The author of this classical outburst was a mountaineer wine-grower, swarthy, stocky, with bristling hair and a bull-neck overflowing his celluloid collar. The bumptious voice rang out with all the untimely brutality of a theatre claque. Tyrant Banderas produced his cigarette-case and passed round his Virginia tobacco:

"Well, as I've just been saying, all this rends the heart and the responsibilities of government become a very heavy burden. Look around for a man who will sustain the finances and guide the vital energies of the country into the proper channels. There are undoubtedly many men in the Republic better fitted to govern the country successfully than this old valetudinarian. All the representative elements, native as well as foreign, should come to an agreement . . ."

He spoke swaying his parchment head, his gaze a mystery behind the greenish spectacles. A murmur arose from the line of *Gachupines*, expressive of a flattering dissent. Don Celestino crowed:

"Providential personages can only be replaced by providential personages!"

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The crowd applauded, shifting uneasily on the stone flags like cattle beset by flies. With a Quakerish grimace, Tyrant Banderas shook hands with the pompous *Gachupín*:

"Stay awhile, Don Celes, and we'll have a game of frog."

"Very happy!"

With an abrupt change of manner, Tyrant Banderas took curt leave of the other Spaniards:

"My friends, I don't want to keep you from your affairs any longer. At your orders!"

VI

A barefoot mulatto woman with grizzled hair and tremulous breasts, brought in the refreshments of lemonade and chocolate, so dear to the hearts of friar and magistrate in the days of the viceroys. With the silver and crystal tinkling in her dark hands, the wench cast a glance of hesitant inquiry at her master. Don Santos gave a nod of his head in the direction of a camp-table which straddled its spidery legs under an archway. The mulatto wench hastened to obey. Submissive, moist, lubricous, she bent and glided. Don Santos wet his lips in the lemonade:

"I've been taking this refreshment for fifty consecutive years and it acts as a tonic . . . I recommend it to you, Don Celes."

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Don Celes puffed up with importance:

"It happens to be my favorite drink. I'm proud to see we have the same tastes! Yes, indeed!"

With a morose expression, Tyrant Banderas dodged this emphatic cloud of incense and withdrew behind his look of taciturnity:

"Don Celes, my friend, to extirpate a revolution once and for all, what's needed is silver bullets."

The *Gachupín* expressed a pompous assent:

"Powderless and noiseless bullets!"

The mummy went on with an enigmatic grimace:

"Yes, my friend, the silent ones are the best. In every revolution there are two critical moments: first, that of the lightning executions, and then the second, when what's needed is silver bullets. Don Celes, if we had those bullets now they'd win us the most important battles. The thing to do now is to win over the revolutionists. I'm just to my enemies and I'm alive to the fact that they have many sympathizers in neighboring republics. Amongst the revolutionists there are men of education who with their knowledge could be of great service to the country. Isn't that true, Don Celes?"

Don Celes flushed up with an oily smile of assent:

"I'm entirely of your opinion. Yes, indeed!"

"Well, it's for those very men of education that I want the silver bullets. There are amongst them some excellent minds that would shine in comparison with

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the famous personages of foreign countries. In Europe those men can carry on studies which will orientate us here. Their place is in the diplomatic corps . . . in scientific conventions . . . in the delegations appointed for foreign countries."

The plutocrat applauded the idea:

"Now that's sound politics!"

And General Banderas whispered to him confidentially:

"Don Celes, for such politics I need a good big munition of silver. What do you say? Be honest with me, and don't let this matter go any further. I take you as my counselor because I recognize your worth."

Don Celes puffed at his moustache, frosted over with brilliantine, and inhaled with a Sybarite's delight the tonsorial effluvium scattered in the ambient of his person. The peeled onion of his bald pate glistened like a Buddhic belly, and a day-dream of Oriental mirages obscured his thought: "The victualing contract for the Liberating Army." Tyrant Banderas broke the spell:

"You're thinking it over carefully and it's proper you should, because it's a matter of the greatest importance."

Hand on paunch, the *Gachupín* declaimed:

"My fortune, always a very small one, has recently been much reduced. But such as it is, I place it at the disposal of the Government. It's little I can contribute, but that little represents the fruit of honest labor in this

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generous land, which I love as my adopted country."

Tyrant Banderas interrupted him with the impatient gesture of driving off a horse-fly:

"Wouldn't the Spanish Colony cover a government loan?"

"The Colony has lately suffered many reverses. Nevertheless, considering the ties that bind them to the Republic . . ."

The General compressed his lips, deep in thought:

"Does the Spanish Colony understand to what extent its interests are imperiled by the revolutionary program? If they do understand it, get to work on them in the sense I have indicated. The Government counts on them alone for the triumph of law and order. All this evil propaganda has created a state of anarchy in the country."

Don Celes expanded his rotundity:

"The Indian as master of the land is a scholars' Utopia."

"Agreed. For that very reason I have told you that these scholars should be given posts outside the country, where their talents cannot be injurious to the Republic. Don Celestino, ammunition of silver is indispensable, and you are hereby commissioned to take charge of the matter. Have a talk with the Secretary of the Exchequer. Don't delay it. He has studied the question and will give you all necessary information. Talk over the guarantees with him and make a quick

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decision, because it's urgently necessary to open a silver barrage on the revolutionary forces. Foreigners give credence to the slanders propagated by the news agencies! We have registered our protest through diplomatic channels in an attempt to curb the campaign of defamation. But that's not enough. Don Celes, my friend, with your nimble pen you're the man to draw up a document which, signed by the most prominent Spaniards, will put the case before the Government of the Mother Country. The Colony must point the way and make these thoughtless statesmen understand that the program of the revolutionists means the Yellow Peril in America. The revolution spells the ruin of the Spanish ranchman. Let them realize that over there; let them wake up to themselves. This is a very serious moment, Don Celestino! I've got wind of a certain move the Diplomatic Corps is planning. According to rumor, there's going to be a protest over the executions of Zamalpoa. Do you happen to know whether the Minister of Spain thinks of indorsing the protest?"

The bald pate of the rich *Gachupín* grew red:

"It would be a slap in the face to the Colony!"

"Well, do you consider the Minister of Spain the kind of person to deliver such a slap?"

"He's apathetic. . . . He does whatever is easiest for him. He's hard to make out."

"Has he got any business dealings?"

"He's got debts that he never pays. What better

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business dealings do you want? He looks upon his residence in the Republic as an exile."

"Are you afraid of any crooked work?"

"I am, rather."

"Then it will have to be circumvented."

The *Gachupín* simulated a sudden inspiration with a slap on his bulging forehead:

"The Colony can bring pressure to bear on the Minister."

The green Indian mask of Don Santos broke into a grin:

"Now that's what you call hitting the nail on the head! Energetic measures are necessary. The Spaniards settled in this country have interests to protect which run counter to diplomatic Utopias. All these professional lucubrations denote an ignorance of American realities. For the polity of these countries, Humanity is a three-headed entelechy: the Creole, the Indian and the Negro. Three humanities. In these countries any other polity is pure rot."

Pompous and baroque, the *Gachupín* stretched out his hand:

"As I listen to you my admiration increases!"

"Don't lose any time, Don Celes. That means we'll postpone my invitation till tomorrow. Don't you like to play frog? It's my great recreative medicine—a game I've played since I was a youngster, and I get in

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a little practice every afternoon. Very healthful and doesn't ruin you like other games."

The *Gachupin* beamed:

"It's astonishing how alike we are in our tastes!"

"Don Celes, *au revoir*."

"Does that mean until tomorrow?"

Don Santos nodded his head:

"If it can be before, all the better. I never sleep."

Don Celes exclaimed approvingly:

"'A model of energy,' as our paper says!"

The Tyrant bid him a cerèmonious good-bye in a fugue of dissonant squawks and cackles.

VII

Tyrant Banderas, buried in the recess of a window, had all the weird fascination of a nocturnal bird. From his height he scanned the yard where a few platoons of Indians were still manœuvering, armed with ancient muskets. The city was kindled with reflections over the emerald sea. The breeze blew fragrant, laden with the scent of tamarind- and orange-blossoms. In the remote, empty zenith floated colored balloons with glittering tails. Santa Fe was holding its autumn fairs, a tradition dating from the time of the viceroys. The gig of Don Celes, sprightly and frolicksome, frisked down the monastery hill with dudish caper. The city, a puerile checkerboard of rose and white terraces

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perched in a curve of the port, vibrated in a flood of light. The sea was flecked with ripples, and on the azure desolation of afternoon burst the red blare of cornets from the barracks. The *Gachupín's* gig went capering like a black spider along the sunny limits of Cuesta Mostenses.

VIII

Tyrant Banderas, stationed in the window, remote and motionless, had more than ever the weird semblance of a nocturnal bird. Cuesta Mostenses swam in the effulgence of the western sea, and a blind man, peppered with smallpox, strummed a guitar under a prickly-pear that stretched up its arms like a candelabrum of Jerusalem. The voice of the blind man rent the fevered silence:

"Don Diego Pedernales
Was of noble lineage,
But he proved himself unworthy
Of his illustrious name."

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BOOK TWO

THE MINISTER OF SPAIN

I

THE Spanish Legation had been lodged for many years in a great old house with tiled façade and Solomonic wooden balconies enclosed in glass, near-by a secluded French fountain, which through a gallant legend had come to be known as "The Mirror of the Viceroy's Lady." About the Baron of Benicarlés, Minister Plenipotentiary of Her Catholic Majesty, there hung another gallant and morbid mystery, like that of the Viceroy's lady, who used to gaze upon her image mirrored in the garden pool, rapt in carnal fantasy. His Excellency Señor Don Mariano Isabel Cristino Queralt y Roca de Togores, Baron of Benicarlés and *Maestrante* * of Ronda, had the cracked voice of an old woman and the gait of a dancer. Glossy, bulky, and inane, much prone to gossip and tale-bearing, he oozed artificial honey. His hands and double-chin formed rolls of fat. He spoke with French nasals, and under

* Member of a *maestranza* or society of aristocrats, whose purpose is the perfection of horsemanship. There exist several such societies in Spain and each is distinguished by a particular uniform.

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his heavy eyelids hovered the cold fantasy of depraved literature: a grotesque figure, a literary poseur, and a devotee of decadent cenacles with rite and psalmody of French metrics. The shade of the ardent Vicereine, hovering in the depths of the garden, many times wept bitter tears as, covering her face in shame, jealous and perplexed, she gazed upon the love-feast unadorned by woman.

II

All-Saints and All-Souls. At this time of year the Calzada de la Virreina was luminous and vibrant with stands and stalls. The *Gachupín's* gig, rolling along with foppish caper, drew up before the Spanish Legation. A Chinaman, with his back divided in two by a long cue, was bent over, sprinkling the vestibule. Don Celes mounted the broad stairway and crossed a gallery with pictures in penumbra, carvings, gildings, and brocades. The *Gachupín* was overcome with a bombastic emotion, an emphatic sense of pride and reverence. The fanfare of sonorous, historic names jangled in his mind like sleigh-bells, and he felt dizzied, as in a parade of banners and cannon. His illusive, patriotic arrogance overflowed into the measured strains of a flashy, strident music. He paused at one end of the gallery. The door, silent and luminous, open upon the great empty drawing-room, strangely damped the spirits of the baroque *Gachupín,* and his thoughts broke into helter-skelter flight, like bucking

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broncos. All his mental fireworks were suddenly extinguished and he felt sorry to be there on such a mission. Arid, stripped of all emotion, as timid as if he were penniless, he entered the empty drawing-room, discomposing the gilded symmetry of mirrors and consoles.

III

The Baron of Benicarlés, in mandarin's kimono, was seated on a lounge in another apartment, carefully plucking fleas from his lap-dog. Don Celes entered with his look of arrogance but ill-restored between the paunchy forehead and the cinnamon side-whiskers. It was as if his belly had suddenly deflated like a pricked balloon:

"Your Excellency, if I am interrupting, I shall retire."

"Come in, my illustrious Don Celestino."

The lap-dog let out a yelp. With a grin, the diplomatic scarecrow gave a tug at its ear:

"Quiet, Merlín! Don Celes, we are so seldom honored with your visit that the first secretary no longer knows you."

On the weary crassness of the diplomatic scarecrow's lips there spread a smile, slow and malignant, amiable and inane. But Don Celes was looking at Merlín, and Merlín was showing his teeth at Don Celes. The Minister of Her Catholic Majesty, abstracted, evanescent, and ambiguous, expanded his

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smile with unbelievable elasticity, like a neutral diplomat in time of war. Between the scarecrow's grimace and the sharp muzzle of the lap-dog, Don Celes was seized with a childish anguish. With his fawning, pedantic air, filled with a pompous affection, he bent over the animal:

"Don't you want to make friends?"

The lap-dog gave a yelp and curled up on the knees of its master, who gazed drowsily from his white, egg-like eyes, scarcely tinted with blue, indifferent as two glass balls, and consonant with the endless smile of an artificial and ceremonious deference. His plump hand, covered with dimples—the hand of an odalisque—caressed the dog's silky coat:

"Merlín, behave yourself!"

"He has declared war on me!"

Exuding the air of weariness from his whole crass, pudgy body, the Baron of Benicarlés yielded his person to the kisses of the lap-dog. Don Celes, rubicund between his cinnamon side-whiskers, began little by little to swell up again, but with a shade of misgiving, with the intimate and anxious cowardliness of the hissed actor. The voice of the diplomatic personage issued muffled and nasal from under the kisses of the lap-dog:

"How are things going, Don Celes? What bright idea have you brought me from the Spanish Colony? I suppose you come as their ambassador? . . . Well, the ice is broken, my illustrious Don Celes."

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Don Celes puckered up his face in a friendly expression, acquiescent, fatalistic. The flabby brow, the apoplectic dewlap, the bombastic belly disguised but ill the *Gachupín's* embarrassment. He broke into a false laugh:

"The justly famous diplomatic sagacity is once more confirmed, my dear Baron."

Merlín began to bark, and the scarecrow raised a threatening finger:

"Don't interrupt, Merlín! Don Celes, pardon the discourtesy and kindly continue."

Don Celes sought to summon courage by making a mental survey of the Baron's I.O.U.'s which he had in hand. He struggled fiercely against deflation. He closed his eyes:

"The Colony, in view of the ties which bind them to the country, cannot remain indifferent to its political problems. Their interests are involved here as well as the fruits of their labor. Now, with my pacifistic sentiments and my faith in a liberal régime under the guidance of stable men, I find myself in an ambiguous position, what with the revolutionary program on one hand, and on the other the extremely summary procedure of General Banderas. But the Spanish unanimity has about won me over as regards their course of conduct, because Don Santos Banderas is still our most solid guarantee of law and order. The victory of the revolutionists would bring chaos!"

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"When revolutionists succeed they become very prudent."

"But there's always a period of commercial crisis. Business is affected, finances are unstable, banditry breaks out again on the highways."

The Minister observed pointedly:

"No more than now, with civil war."

"Civil war! Those of us who have lived many years in the country look upon that as endemic. But the program of the revolutionists is a more serious matter, since it strikes at the sacred foundations of property. The Indian in possession of the land is a demagogical aberration which cannot prevail in well-ordered minds. The Colony is unanimously of this opinion. I perhaps accept it with certain reservations, but as a practical man I understand that the interests of Spanish capital cannot be harmonized with revolutionary ideals."

The Minister of Her Catholic Majesty leaned back on the lounge and snuggled the lag-dog's muzzle in the hollow of his neck:

"Don Celes, is that ultimatum of the Colony official?"

"Your Excellency, it is not an ultimatum. The Colony only asks to be enlightened."

"They ask it or they demand it?"

"I must have expressed myself badly. As a business man, I have but little mastery of oratorical shades of

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expression. If I have said anything that could give rise to the belief that I am invested with any official capacity, I wish emphatically to correct any such false impression that your Excellency may have received."

With a glint of irony in his pale blue eyes and his odalisque hands buried in the lap-dog's silky coat, the Baron of Benicarlés spread a look of displeasure over his thick lips, anointed with dissolute satiety:

"My illustrious Don Celestino, you are one of the outstanding financial, intellectual, and social personages of the Colony. . . . Your opinions deserve respect. . . . Nevertheless you are not yet the Minister of Spain. A real pity! But that can all be arranged: just send a cable requesting my recall. I will second the petition and sell you my furniture at auction."

The plutocrat puffed up with witty vanity:

"Including Merlín as counselor?"

The diplomatic personage received the witticism with a cold lassitude which wiped it out:

"Don Celes, kindly advise our Spaniards to abstain from intervening in the political questions of the country, to observe a strict neutrality, and to avoid obstructing the work of the Diplomatic Corps with their intemperance. You will pardon me now, my distinguished friend, if I can give you no more time. I have to dress and attend a conference at the English Legation."

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And in the waning light of the salon, the ungainly scarecrow assumed the world-weary air of an illustrious lineage.

IV

As he crossed the great drawing-room, where the carpet muffled his footsteps, Don Celes felt more than ever in terror of deflation. In the entrance-hall the Chinaman of the long cue was still sprinkling the tiles with childish and maniac abstraction. There welled up in Don Celes all the contempt of the white man for the yellow:

"Get out of my way, you mangy cur, and look out you don't spot my patent-leather!"

Walking on tip-toe, with his belly swaying in double suspension, he reached the door and called to the negro coachman, who with other dusky roustabouts was taking the air under the laurels of a bar (automatic piano with cymbals):

"Make it lively, you idiot!"

V

The Calzada de la Virreina was seething in a luminous tumult of hawkers' cries, colored lanterns, streamers, and guitars. Santa Fe was reveling in a fiery vertigo, fevered with light and shadow. Alcohol and the bowie-knife of the Indian, card-games and lewd dancing formed a succession of violent and tumultuous images. One felt the obscure and desolate

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palpitation of life at the brink of an open grave. With tragic and time-devouring frenzy, Santa Fe was escaping from the terrific lethargy of everyday life with a whoop of fury, tumultuous as a war cry. In the conflagration of the western sky, on the hillock of pomegranate trees and palms, gleamed the round, tiled, Colonial cupolas of San Martín de los Mostenses.

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BOOK THREE

THE GAME OF FROG

I

OFFICIAL business concluded, Tyrant Banderas passed out through the arcade of the lower cloister into the Friars' Garden, followed by his aides and cronies.

"Well, we've done our duty. Now what do you say, my friends, if we enliven this tail-end of the afternoon with a little game of frog?"

Ceremonious and austere, never altering his vinegary visage, he set up the drinks and mopped his skull with a handkerchief fit for a friar or lay-brother.

II

The Friars' Garden, a geometrical ruin of cacti and laurels, enjoyed a view of the ocean. Yellow lizards scurried along the sun-warmed walls. In this spot the game of frog had been set up and recently painted green; it was now enveloped in shadow. Every afternoon the Tyrant beguiled his tedium with this diversion. Chewing his quid of coca, he aimed his throws slowly and carefully, and when he missed, he twisted

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his green mouth in a grimace. Such were his covetousness and absorption in every detail of the game, that not even the volleys of musket-fire, which sent up puffs of smoke in the distance along the sea-shore, were sufficient to distract his attention. The death-sentences were carried out at sunset, and every afternoon a group of revolutionists was dispatched by the firing-squads. Deaf to the fusillades, cruel and maniacal, Tyrant Banderas compressed his lips and took careful aim. The puffs of smoke drifted out to sea.

"Score one!"

Austere, the Tyrant rejoined the group of drinkers, and unfolding his dominie's handkerchief, wiped his bald cranium:

"Take a lesson from that, and don't let your attention be distracted from the game with monkeyshines!"

A heavy effluvium of sultriness and stench announced the proximity of the jungle, where with the stars nightfall kindles the eyes of the jaguars.

III

The old Indian wench, huddled up in the shade of the awning of her brandy and lemonade stand, bounced up, obsequious and lively, at a signal from the Tyrant:

"Coming, master!"

Crossing her tiny Oriental hands, Doña Lupita adjusts the corners of the shawl which she has hurriedly

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thrown over her head. She has a slavish smile and the oblique eyes of a wily serpent; bare feet as burnished as her hands, and an address artful with honeyed phrase and adulation:

"At your orders, General."

General Banderas, stiff and precise, folded his handkerchief:

"Gaining money, Doña Lupita?"

"General, all one gains is patience. Patience and labor, which will have their reward in Heaven. Last Friday I bought me a rope to hang myself with and an angel saved my life. Master, I couldn't find a nail!"

Parsimonious, the Tyrant chewed his quid of coca with quivering jaw and bobbing Adam's-apple:

"Well, old girl, what did you do with the rope?"

"I got it tied on to the Saint of Lima as an offering, master."

"What are you asking of the saint, old girl?"

"Don Santos, I'm asking her that your Honor may rule a thousand years."

"Don't go trying to kid me, Doña Lupita. How many years old are those corn fritters?"

"Just this minute fried, master."

"What else have you got on your counter?"

"Some good juicy cocoanuts. Extra-fine *chicha*,* master. *Aguardiente* for the cowboys."

* An alcoholic beverage made of corn fermented in sugared water.

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"Ask the company what they'll have, old girl, and serve it up to them."

Twisting a corner of her shawl, Doña Lupita questions the group camped around the game of frog, fawning and timorous in the presence of the mummified Tyrant:

"What refreshment will the gentlemen take, sirs? I must warn you beforehand I've got only three glasses. A little while back a colonel came by here drunk and smashed everything to smithereens and went away without paying me the damages."

The Tyrant observed laconically:

"Present a formal complaint and justice will be done."

Doña Lupita flirted her shawl with the air of a tragedy queen.

"But, General, the clerk won't wet his pen unless first you hand him out a fee!"

The Tyrant's chin quivered:

"Well, that's not right either. My audience chamber is open to the poorest wretch in the Republic. Don Sostenes Carrillo, you are hereby charged with instituting an investigation into the alleged mix-up."

IV

Nimble and lively, Doña Lupita trotted off to fetch the cocoanuts lying on the freshly sprinkled earth under a covering of palms. Seated on the stone observation

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bench of the friars, the Tyrant solaced his care-laden spirit. He crossed his waxen hands upon his stick adorned with a gold handle and a doctoral tassel, his chin quivering, on his green mouth an ambiguous expression of mirth, derision, and vinegar:

"That's a pretty smart squaw, Carrillo."

"Yes, chief, she's a smooth article."

"And she's got a pretty smooth tongue, too. Holy cats! I've known her for almost half a century, from the time I was standard-bearer in the Seventh Light Regiment. She was our canteen wench."

Doña Lupita pricked up her ears as she flitted about her stand. Carrillo threw her a warning taunt:

"Don't look so glum, old girl!"

"No flies can enter a closed mouth, sir."

"But how are you going to harness an old woman's tongue?"

"Holy Moses!"

"Which one of the officers smashed up your stand, old girl?"

"Now you want me to tell you, and you'll lay me open to revenge."

"Come on, spit it out!"

Carrillo was happy, baiting the old woman in order to beguile the melancholy of the Tyrant. Wily, and with an air of affliction, Doña Lupita brought out the palm-branches with their clusters of cocoanuts, and a cobbler's knife to cut them with. Major Abilio del

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Valle, who boasted of having cut off many a head, solicited the honor of being allowed to plunge his knife into the fruit. This he did with military dexterity. Bellicose and triumphant, he made offering of the first half cocoanut to the Tyrant, as if delivering up the cranium of an enemy chieftain. The yellow mummy opened his hand and daintly clutched the offering:

"Major, let the old witch drink the other half: if it's poisoned we'll kick off together."

Alert, Doña Lupita took the other half and with a bow drank the liquor:

"General, in this old hide there's nothing but the firmest loyalty. I swear it by Saint Peter and all the Celestial Court!"

Tyrant Banderas, sitting taciturn on the stone bench under the shade of the branches, was the very image of a crazy black owl. Suddenly his figure assumed a rare importance and his hollow-reed voice rare authority:

"Doña Lupita, if you really esteem me as you say, come out with the name of that drunken swine that has so little respect for himself. You'll see, old girl, you'll see that Santos Banderas esteems you, too. Here's my hand on it, old girl. . . ."

"Granddaddy, permit me to kiss it."

Tyrant Banderas heard without stirring the name which the old woman tremblingly whispered in his ear. His cronies, surrounding the game of frog, pricked

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up their ears and made stealthy signs to each other. The Indian mummy:

"Chack! Chack!"

V

With the gait of a prying rat, Tyrant Banderas left the game, followed by his comrades. As he crossed the cloister, a uniformed group that had been jesting at a short distance, suddenly fell silent. The mummy scrutinized the men on passing. With a movement of his head, he summoned Colonel López de Salamanca, Chief of Police:

"At what time is the meeting of the Young Men's Democratic League?"

"At ten."

"In Harris Brothers' Circus?"

"That's what the posters say."

"Who solicited the permit for this meeting?"

"Don Roque Cepeda."

"And were there no difficulties raised?"

"None whatever."

"Have my instructions been faithfully carried out?"

"So I believe. . . ."

"As long as the propagation of political ideals keeps within the law, it is a citizen's right and deserves all the respect of the Government."

The Tyrant twisted his mouth with a malignant expression. The Chief of Police, Colonel López

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de Salamanca, listened with bantering nonchalance:

"General, shall the meeting be suspended in the event of disturbances?"

"The Regulations governing the Public Peace will fully resolve any doubts you may feel."

The Colonel assumed an air of facetious priggishness:

"Mr. President, I shall limit my conduct to a strict enforcement of the law."

"In any case, if you should proceed with excessive zeal—always a laudable thing—it won't cost you much of a sacrifice to hand in your resignation. On accepting it, the Government would undoubtedly bear your services in mind."

The Colonel stressed a query:

"Mr. President, have you no other orders to give me?"

"Are you carrying on that investigation into the depravity and dissolute habits of the Honorable Diplomatic Corps?"

"I am, and we've made a rather sensational discovery."

"You will do me the kindness to inform me of it tonight when you make your report."

The Colonel saluted:

"At your orders, General!"

The Indian mummy detained him a moment longer, compressing his green grimace:

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"My policy is respect for the law. The gendarmes must preserve order in Harris Brothers' Circus. Chack! Chack! The Young Men's Democratic League is setting a good example this evening by performing a civic exercise."

The Chief of Police observed jestingly:

"Civic and acrobatic."

The Tyrant, crafty and ambiguous, clapped shut the green grimace of his mouth:

"Well, perhaps! . . . Chack! Chack!"

VI

Tyrant Banderas walked on silently. His cronies followed on behind as quiet as if attending a funeral. He paused in the shadow of the monastery under the cry of the sentry, who in the dismantled belfry gored the moon with his bayonet. Tyrant Banderas stood gazing at the starry sky. He loved the night and the heavenly bodies: that arcanum of wondrous enigmas solaced the ache of his gloomy spirit. He could calculate time by the constellations. The brilliant mathematics of the stars filled him with wonder. The eternity of astral laws gave a religious pause to his stoic Indian cruelty. He entered the door of the monastery under the night-cry of the sentinel in the tower, and the reserve corps, opening ranks, presented arms. Distrustful, the Tyrant, on passing by, scrutinized the dark faces of the soldiers.

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PART TWO

POWWOW AND SHINDY

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BOOK ONE

IBERIAN FLINT

I

GARISH reds and yellows draped the balconies of the Spanish Casino. In the luminous path of the terrace stood, pert and frivolous, the gig of Don Celes.

II

In the depths of the park, the translucent canvas of Harris Brothers' Circus outlined its cupola against a starry green sky. A vociferous rabble was jammed around the entrances, under the blinking arc-lights. Mounted police were stationed at the intersections of adjoining streets and the Tyrant's spies snooped about among the crowd. Huzzas and applause greeted the appearance of the speakers. They arrived in a group, surrounded by students with banners. They saluted the crowd with a waving of hats, pale, theatrical, heroic. The surging, tumultuous mob fell back under the club of the gendarmes, clearing a path to the entrances of the circus. The lights within lent a tawny transparency to the canvas cupola. Successive groups

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with flags and Bengal-lights, hand-clapping and mutinous clamor, like a challenge, vociferated in front of the Spanish Casino:

"Long live Don Roque Cepeda!"

"Long live the emancipator of the Indian!"

"Viva-a-a! . . ."

"Down with tyrrany!"

"Down with it! . . ."

"Down with the *Gachupines*!"

"Down with 'em! . . ."

III

The Spanish Casino—flowered brocades, gilded chandeliers, bombastic mouldings—broke loose, loutish and rubicund, into thundering bravados. The Board of Directors had just closed a brief meeting without minutes, but with verbal and secret agreements. Stealthy whisperings began to run through the salons, independently of the blustering fanfare. Shortly the plan to rush out in phalanx and break up the meeting by brute force was being openly discussed. The swaggering Spaniards snorted a patriotic bellow. The bald card-players left their stakes in the plate. Other boors banged the table with the dominoes and pop-bottles. The billiard players made for the balconies, brandishing their cues. A few Tartuffian voices of grocers and pawn-brokers demanded prudence and an escort of gendarmes to preserve order. The lights and the

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shouts lent a rowdy, soap-box air to the salons, decorated in vulgar imitation of the ministerial offices of the mother country. Suddenly the Spanish phalanx rushed tumultuously on to the balconies. Shouts and applause:

"Long live Spain!"

"Long live General Banderas!"

"Long live the Latin race!"

"Long live the President!"

"Long live Don Pelayo!"

"Long live the Cathedral of Zaragoza!"

"Long live Don Isaac Peral!"

"Long live honest business!"

"Long live the hero of Zamalpoa!"

In the streets mounted troops were hacking at the dusky, sheeted rabble, that fled without drawing the knives from their breasts.

IV

Under the protection of the gendarmes, the blustering mob of *Gachupines* distributed themselves around the tables of the terrace.—Bravos, boasts, applause.—Don Celes chewed at a long cigar, seated between two of his peers: Mr. Contum, a Yankee adventurer with mining interests, and a Spanish ranchman, conspicuous for his wealth, an ignorant, hard, and fanatic native of Avila, endowed with a superstitious devotion to that principle of authority which intimidates and

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terrifies. Don Teodosio del Araco, a flinty Iberian, perpetuated the colonial tradition of the commissioner. Don Celes was holding forth with the vacuous self-assurance of the plutocrat, aiming with his eloquence to dazzle the half-breed waiter who was serving his coffee. The street was a seething tumult. Crowds of Indians pressed around the lights and cornets, which were advertising the meeting. With the sourness of an inquisitor, Don Teodosio pronounced a laconic judgment:

"Look at those monkeyshines!"

Don Celes flushed up with self-sufficiency:

"In permitting this propaganda, the Government headed by General Banderas show their respect for all shades of political opinion. This meeting only strengthens his prestige. General Banderas is not afraid of discussion: he authorizes such debates. The words he spoke on issuing the permit for tonight's meeting deserve to be remembered: 'Citizens will find within the law the sure road to the pacific exercise of their rights.' You will agree with me that only a great statesman could have said that! I believe these words of the President's will go down in history."

Don Teodosio del Araco laconically assented:

"They deserve to!"

Mr. Contum looked at his watch:

"It might be interesting to hear the speeches. Then tomorrow I'd know all about it. I like to hear things

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with my own ears and not take them second-hand."

Don Celes bent over with inane importance:

"It's not worth while to smother to death in that stuffy atmosphere."

"I want to hear Don Roque Cepeda."

Don Teodosio observed with a bilious smirk:

"A lunatic! A fool! It seems incredible that a man of his financial position should join hands with these revolutionary ragamuffins—a gang of bums!"

Don Celes explained with ironic pity:

"Roque Cepeda is an idealist."

"Well, then, let 'em lock him up!"

"On the contrary, let him keep on with his propaganda. He'll soon come to grief."

Don Teodosio shook his head, devoured with misgivings:

"You people don't realize the unrest that the preachings of these agitators has stirred up in the Indian peasant. The Indian is naturally mean; he never appreciates his master's kindness; he puts on an air of humility and all the time he's sharpening his knife. Only by flogging him can you keep him straight. He's weaker than the Antillean negro, does less work, and gets drunk more often. I've had niggers, and I can assure you they're way superior to the Indian of these Pacific Ocean republics."

Mr. Contum delivered himself of a funereal witticism:

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"If the Indian weren't weak perhaps the whites wouldn't live so secure in this Paradise of Punta Serpientes."

Fanning himself with his Panama hat, Don Celes expressed his agreement:

"Undoubtedly. But that very postulate proves that the Indian isn't fit to exercise authority."

Don Teodosio became impassioned:

"He's puny and he's alcoholic! He needs the white man's lash to make him work and be of use to society!"

The Yankee of the mining interests again spoke up:

"Mr. Araco, if there's any place where the yellow peril represents a menace, it's in these republics."

Don Celes inflated his patriotic belly, eliciting a jingle from the watch-charms of the great chain which spanned his paunch from pocket to pocket:

"To keep to the path of civilization these republics will turn their gaze to the Mother Country. There shine the historic destinies of twenty nations!"

Mr. Contum elongated his lean profile, like that of a yellow parrot, in a disdainful grimace:

"If the Creole manages to keep in the saddle, it's thanks to the cannon and warships of the United States."

The Yankee closed one eye and surveyed the curve of his nose. And the mobs of Indians still vociferated

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round-about the arc-lights which advertised the meeting:

"Down with Uncle Sam!"

"Down with the *Gachupines*!"

"Down with the Yankee swine!"

V

At a neighboring table the editor of "The Spanish Criterion" was sipping a refreshment of pineapple, kirsch, and soda, which had made the bartender of the Metropole famous. Don Celes, rotund and pedantic, went out to the middle of the pavement, fanning himself with his Panama hat:

"Congratulations on your editorial! Absolutely in accord with your thesis!"

The editor-proprietor of "The Spanish Criterion" had a gross, ultra-patriotic, and hyperbolic pen and many fervent devotees amongst the Spanish grocers and pawnbrokers. Don Nicolás Diaz de Rivero, a wary and uncouth personage, cloaked his perfidy with the rude accent of the Ebro. In Spain he had termed himself a Carlist till he had made away with the funds of the Seventh Regiment of Navarre. Overseas he extolled the cause of the Restoration. He had two big medals, the brand new title of Count, a loan office, and little to recommend him. Don Celes approached him with a confidential air, holding his Panama hat over

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his belly, removing the cigar from his lips, and flinging out his arms in a theatrical gesture:

"Well, what do you say of this evening's performance? Shall we read all about it tomorrow?"

"All that the blue-pencil permits. Have a chair, Don Celes. I've got my hounds on the scent and some one of them is sure to come along with some news. I hope tonight we'll be spared any serious disturbance of the peace! In these revolutionary propaganda meetings passions are liable to boil over. . . ."

Don Celes drew up a rocking-chair and sank into it, fanning himself the while with his Panama hat:

"If there's any outbreak of the rabble, I'd hold Don Roque Cepeda responsible. Did you ever see such a crack-brained nut! A little time in Santa Mónica wouldn't be bad for him."

The editor of "The Spanish Criterion" leaned over confidentially and lowered his blatant voice with a great show of mystery:

"It might just happen that they had the trap all set for him. What impression did you get from your talk with the General?"

"The General is uneasy about the attitude of the Diplomatic Corps. He's anxious not to overstep legal limits and to my mind that accounts for the permit to hold this meeting. . . . Or perhaps it's what you just said: a trap! . . ."

"Wouldn't that be a master-stroke? But perhaps

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this anxiety which you observed in the President . . . Ah, here's our bard, Larrañaga. Come here, bard. . . ."

VI

The bard Larrañaga was a slender, pallid, beardless youth, with a romantic mane, flowing tie, rings on his dingy fingers, and the sweet virginal expression of the impassioned soul. He came forward with a timid bow:

"Sánchez Ocaña is just making the first speech."

The editor cut him short:

"Have you got your notes? Give them here. I'll look them over and send them to press. How's the audience taking it?"

"In general, with great enthusiasm. A few protests from the gallery, but they were drowned out with applause. He's got the audience with him."

Smoking his cigar, Don Celes gazed at the stars:

"Is Sánchez Ocaña really and actually such an eloquent orator? From the little I've had to do with him he seemed to me quite mediocre."

Smiling timidly, the bard withheld his opinion. Don Nicolás Diaz de Rivero ran his flashing spectacles over the sheets. The poet Larrañaga stood by, silent and diffident. The editor raised his head:

"You've not got the political angle. We can't say that the audience greeted Sánchez Ocaña's appearance with an ovation. You might say 'The compliant applause of some few friends was all too inadequate to

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conceal the fiasco of so rambling a piece of oratory, which was anything but Ciceronic.' That's a composition of the most elementary type. Every day you get to be less and less of a journalist!"

The bard smiled shyly:

"And I was afraid I'd gone too far with my criticism!"

The editor ran over the sheets:

"'Much of truth' is a Gallicism."

The bard accommodatingly corrected his error:

"Participates of an undeniable veracity."

"The Academy does not sanction that expression."

The breeze wafted a muffled outburst of shouts and clapping. Don Celes protested with hollow sonority:

"The masses everywhere are carried away by metaphors!"

The editor-proprietor cast a look of reproach at the meek reporter:

"What's that applause? Do you know who's got the floor?"

"It's probably Sánchez Ocaña still talking."

"Well, what are you doing here? Get back there and help out your colleague. Listen, bard: here's an idea which, if you can manage to work it out, will mean a great journalistic success for you. Write this thing up as if it were a circus performance with trained parrots. Spread on the flim-flam. Start out by

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courteously congratulating the management of Harris Brothers' Circus."

Don Celes puffed up:

"There now! There's the born journalist!"

The editor declined the eulogy with a mysterious pucker of brow and lip. He went on addressing the pallid poet:

"Who's helping you to cover this meeting?"

"Fray Mocho."

"Don't let that swine get drunk!"

The bard Larrañaga shrank away, disclaiming responsibility with his humble smile:

"Au revoir."

There came another round of applause.

VII

On the resplendent pavements, an uproar of hawkers' cries. Zigzagging of negro bootblacks. Tinkling trays borne on high by the waiters of the American bar. A showy undulation of mulatto girls, flanked by an old duenna. Forms, lights, shadows multiply and intertwine, provoking that hallucinatory, shadowy, Oriental vibration which is summed up in opium and *marihuana.*

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BOOK TWO

HARRIS BROTHERS' CIRCUS

I

THE HARRIS BROTHERS' CIRCUS opened its parasol of tawny, diaphanous canvas amid foliage and arc-lights. Pairs of gendarmes adorned the lighted entrances with rhythmic pacings. Their drooping moustaches and jaws squared by their chin-straps gave them all the look of startled amazement of Chinese masks. Populous groups were stationed in noisy impatience along the avenues of the park: the overseer with *poncho* and machete, the Creole in his broad, silver-trimmed hat, the sheeted pariah, and the Indian mountaineer. In the background the diaphanous parasol outlined its triangular lights against the starry green sky.

II

With the gyrations of a limp, black vulture, the bard Larrañaga cut through the steely ranks of gendarmes and entered the canvas cupola, which was shuddering under rounds of applause. Sánchez Ocaña was still on

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his tenor's aria. Mopping his brow, with tie undone, the bard sat down beside his colleague, Fray Mocho, a pockmarked old codger with a pendulous nose and the ink slinger's dinginess. He greeted the bard with a vinous blast:

"Great piece of oratory!"

"Have you been taking notes?"

"Not much! It's a torrent!"

"And it never ends!"

"He's making up for lost time."

III

The orator dissolved a sugar-cone in a glass of water. He stretched his neck up out of his collar. He gave a tug at his starched cuffs:

"If these former colonies of Spain are to return to the path of their historic destinies, they must harken to the voice of the primitive civilizations of America. Only by so doing shall we some day cease to be a spiritual colony of the Old World. Catholicism and juridical corruption form the basis of all Latin colonial policy in our America. Catholicism and juridical corruption are the shackles which bind us to a discredited, egotistical, and mendacious civilization. But if we rise up against this juridical-religious abjection, let it be to forge a new vinculum through which our millenary tradition of communism shall be revived in a future replete with human solidarity, that future which is

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shaking the entrails of the world with the panic quakings of a cataclysm."

A voice rang out:

"Go to hell!"

There was a sudden tumult, a surge of humanity, hoots, cries, and arms raised on high. The gendarmes dragged out a half-breed whose skull had been cracked with a cudgel. Sánchez Ocaña, a little pale, smiled with theatrical affectation as he stirred the spoon in the glass of water. The bard, all aflutter, leaned over and whispered in Fray Mocho's ear:

"What I'd give to be master of my pen! The boss wants a scathing criticism. . . ."

Fray Mocho extracted a small flask from his pocket, and bending down, raised it to his lips:

"Very eloquent!"

"It's shameful to sell your conscience!"

"Aw, rot! You're not selling your conscience; you're selling your pen, which isn't quite the same thing."

"For a lousy thirty *pesos*!"

"Well, it's your bread and butter. Don't be poetic. Want a swig?"

"What is it?"

"Chicha."

"I don't want any."

IV

The orator gave a tug at his cuffs, flashed the links, and approached the footlights. He was received with

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a salvo of applause. With a tenor's bow, he soared aloft on his aria:

"The Creole preserves all the privileges, all the prerogatives of the old colonial laws. The early Liberators were powerless to destroy them, and today the indigene lives in serfdom to the land holders, just as in the darkest days of the viceroys. Our America has shaken off the tutelage of Spain, but not so her prejudices, upon which Church and State, in a pact of Pharisees, have put their seal. No attempt has been made to emancipate the Indian who, despised and defenseless, toils on the estates and in the mines, under the lash of an overseer. The obligation to redeem him must be our revolutionary article of faith—an ideal of justice greater than patriotism, for it represents an ardent aspiration after human solidarity. The Pacific Ocean, the sea of our racial destinies, harkens, in its most widely separated regions, to the same voices of fraternity and of protest. The yellow peoples are awakening, not to avenge their wrongs, but to destroy the juridical tyranny of capitalism, the cornerstone of the decrepit States of Europe. The Pacific Ocean accompanies the rhythm of its tides with the unanimous voices of the Asiatic and American races, which in the anguished sleep of centuries have gestated the ideal of a new consciousness, moulded of such obligations, such sacrifices, such arduous and mystic struggles, that necessarily it must seem a Brahman's delirium to the sordid civilizations

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of Europe, tainted with all the concupiscence and egoism of private property. The European nations, born of wars and trickery, are not alive to the shameful nature of their history; they do not conceal their crimes nor disavow their bloody rapine. The European nations carry their indecency to the point of proudly boasting of their felonies, of bragging about their brazen immorality throughout the centuries. And this degradation is held up before the children in their schools as a glorious achievement. With respect to our ideals, the censure of those nations is the Roman's censure of the doctrines of the Saviour. That obese patrician, bent over the vomitory, reasoned with the very same retchings. A master of slaves, he was defending his property. Spotted with the filth of his gluttony and satiety, he based his social life and the enjoyment of his riches upon the postulate of servitude. Gangs of slaves harvested the grain. Gangs of slaves went down into the mines. Gangs of slaves pulled at the oars in the trireme. Agriculture, the working of metals, maritime commerce could not exist without the slave. So reasoned the patrician of ancient Rome. And the master's steel in the flesh of the slave became an ethical precept indispensable to the public weal and the well-being of the Empire. More than political revolutionists, more than the sons of a limited and tangible country, we are the catechumens of a religious creed. Illuminated by the radiance of a new

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consciousness, we gather together in the narrow confines of this tent, like the slaves of the catacombs, to create a new Universal Country. We wish to convert this stony world into a starry altar, whereon shall be worshipped all things which love ordains—the cult of eternal harmony, to which we can attain only through equality amongst men. Let us give to our lives the fatal and distinterested significance of stellar existencies. Let us bind ourselves to the one objective of fraternity, our souls purged of the egoism engendered by thine and mine, transcending the spheres of avarice and robbery."

V

A fresh tumult. A boorish, blustering mob of *Gachupines* was bellowing in the ring:

"Faker!"

"Clodhopper!"

"Loafer!"

"Bum!"

"Outlaw!"

"Down with the revolutionary rabble!"

The mob of *Gachupines* brandished their cudgels under the protection of the gendarmes. In clandestine concert, the Tyrant's disguised sleuths rioted in the rows of seats. The skirmish of mutual insult waxed fiercer:

"Blockheads!"

"Down with tyranny!"

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"Clowns!"
"Ragamuffins!"
"Beggars!"
"Outcasts!"
"Goofs!"
"Anarchists!"
"Long live General Banderas!"
"Down with the revolutionary rabble!"
The rows of blanketed Indians surged and billowed:
"Long live Don Roquito!"
"Long live the apostle!"
"Down with tyranny!"
"Down with the foreigner!"

The gendarmes began to strike right and left with their sabres. A smashing of globes, shrieks, brandishing arms, bloody faces. The ring broken up into angles: a cubist's vision of Harris Brothers' Circus.

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BOOK THREE

THE FOX'S EAR

I

SNIFFING about like a nosey rat, Tyrant Banderas left the circle of his fawning cronies and crossed the cloister. He signaled to the Inspector of Police, Colonel López de Salamanca, who had just come in, to follow him. The mummy walked through the locutory with sharp scrutiny, followed by his comrades, and approached the cell where it was his custom to receive his secret agents. Pausing in the doorway, he saluted with the bow of an old Quaker:

"My illustrious Don Celes, kindly excuse me for just a moment. Inspector, come in and get your orders."

II

The Inspector walked to the door, exchanging winks, chucking chins, and cracking jests in a low voice. Were General Banderas in the cell, or about to enter, or had he his back turned, and were he to swing round, every man could have been caught in the act of winking dramatically. The Inspector of Police, López de Salamanca, was little more than thirty years of age: a

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shrewd man of university training and racy speech. The grandson of Spanish land holders, he labored under a sentimental and absurd heritage of pride and caste privilege. Such is the inherited contempt for the Indian which tinctures the mind of the Creole mestizo, master of the land, a caste of aristocrats known in those republics as the "patricians." The Colonel-Inspector entered the cell. Assuming an air of dignity:

"At your orders, General!"

Tyrant Banderas motioned to him to leave the door open. He remained silent. Shortly he began to speak with a stubborn measuring of every syllable:

"Tell me, has the League held its powwow? What parrots spoke?"

"Sánchez Ocaña made the opening address. Very revolutionary."

"Come then, on what subject?"

"The emancipation of the Indian. Pre-Columbian communism. The Marseillaise of the Pacific Ocean. Fraternity of the yellow races. A lot of rot!"

"What other parrots?"

"There wasn't time for more. There was the inevitable clash of *Gachupines* and natives, and the gendarmes had to intervene."

"Any arrests made?"

"I ordered Don Roque and one or two others taken to my office to safeguard them from the wrath of the populace."

"Well done. Though of contrary ideas, they are

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estimable persons and their lives should be safeguarded. If the mob gets any wilder, put them up in Santa Mónica. Don't be afraid of going too far. Tomorrow, if it were necessary, I'd go myself and release them from prison and present my personal and official excuses. I repeat, don't be afraid of going too far. What's the news of the Honorable Diplomatic Corps? Do you recall what I have told you regarding the Minister of Spain? For our security it would be convenient to have tangible proofs."

"We've done a little work this afternoon."

"I see you're on the job and I congratulate you. Explain to me the situation."

"That Andalusian rowdy—cross between a sodomite and a bull-fighter—Currito Mi-Alma, has been put in the cooler."

"Who is this personage?"

"That's the sweet young thing that trots in and out of the Spanish Legation like a lap-dog. A few jesting commentaries have appeared in the press."

The Tyrant stiffened up austerely:

"I'm not particularly fond of such gossip. Continue."

"Well, just that. This sweet young thing was arrested this afternoon, charged with indecent behavior. His statements weren't very convincing, so we proceeded to make a search of his domicile."

"That's understood. Go on. Result of the search?"

"I've made a little inventory."

"Go to the light and read me it."

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The Colonel began to read somewhat snuffingly, imitating the tone of a pious old crone:

"One bundle of letters. Two photographs with inscriptions. One stick with gold handle and monogram. One cigarette case with monogram and crest. One necklace. Two bracelets. One curly blond wig, one black one. A box of beauty-patches. Two lady's dresses. Several pieces of silk underwear, trimmed with ribbons."

Tyrant Banderas, wrapt in his Quakerish austerity, thundered his excommunication:

"Disgusting aberrations!"

III

The grated window stood open upon a background of moonlit arcades. Shadowy triangles of flitting bats disturbed the nocturnal clarity of the ruins. Slowly, with that jovial seriousness which spices a sleight-of-hand performance, the Colonel began to subtract from sundry pockets jewels, photographs and letters, placing them on the table in a row before the Tyrant.

"The letters are especially interesting. A pathological case!"

"Pure shamelessness. Colonel, all that shall be filed away. I have the greatest affection for the Mother Country, and for that reason I am very specially interested in saving the Baron of Benicarlés from dishonor. You will immediately take steps to have that

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cur released. It would be well for the Spanish Minister to be apprised of the incident. Perhaps that alone will be sufficient to make him realize the ridiculousness of his playing the fiddle in the side-show of the English Minister. What news have you regarding the conference of the Diplomatic Corps?"

"It has been postponed."

"I should be very sorry if the Minister of Spain were to commit himself unwisely."

"He'll change his mind when the lad breaks the news to him."

Tyrant Banderas nodded his assent. The lamplight fell on his ivory cranium and on the round lenses of his spectacles. He glanced at his watch, a great silver potato, and wound it up with two keys:

"Are you aware whether Don Celes, overcoming his natural disgust with the Minister's attitude, has been able to have an interview with him?"

"He was just now speaking to me about it."

"Well, then, Colonel, if you have nothing very urgent to communicate to me, we'll postpone your report. It will be well to get the particulars of what Don Celestino Galindo has to say. So kindly tell him to come in and you remain here with us."

IV

Don Celes Galindo, the illustrious *Gachupín*, was toying with his hat and stick and eyeing the door of

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the cell. At the dimly lighted end of the great locutory, he, with his strutting rotundity wore the bumptious and preoccupied air of the actor who, standing in the wings, awaits his cue to emerge upon the stage. Seeing the Colonel come to the door and look about, he waved his hat and stick to advise him of his whereabouts. He felt that his great moment had come, and he oozed importance over the magnitude of his rôle. The Colonel raised his voice, dropping a waggish, sarcastic eye on the rest of the company:

"Señor Don Celes, have the kindness . . ."

Don Celes entered the cell, where the Tyrant received him with his elaborate formality:

"I regret you have had to wait and I beg you kindly to accept my apologies. Do not think me indifferent to the news you bring. Have you interviewed the Minister? Have you had a talk with him?"

Don Celes made an ample gesture of disgust:

"I have seen Benicarlés. We conferred upon the question of the policy which the Mother Country should follow in these republics. We are definitely at variance."

Ceremoniously the mummy commented:

"I regret the occurrence, the more so if I am in any way to blame for it."

Don Celes drooped his eyelids and pursed up his lips to convey that the matter was of no importance:

"To corroborate my point of view, I have consulted

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with some of the outstanding personages of the Colony."

"Tell me about His Excellency the Minister of Spain. What are his diplomatic obligations? Why this procedure, so contrary to Spanish interests in this country? Does he not understand that the emancipation of the native spells the ruin of the farmer? The farmers will find themselves faced here with the same agrarian problems which they have left behind them in their own country and which their statesmen are unable to solve."

Don Celes assumed an emphatic and adulatory air:

"Benicarlés is not the sort of man to envisage questions with so much clarity."

"Upon what reasoning does he base his attitude? That's what I'd like to know."

"He doesn't reason."

"How does he defend his point of view?"

"He doesn't defend it."

"He must say something?"

"His idea is to adjust his procedure to whatever point of view the Diplomatic Corps may adopt. I made every kind of objection and even gave him to understand that he was exposing himself to a serious conflict with the Colony, that perhaps he was even risking his career. All in vain! My words went in one ear and out the other. He sat playing with his lap-dog! I was indignant!"

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Tyrant Banderas broke in with his false, measured, and ceremonious speech:

"Don Celes, you will have to overcome your repugnance, and go and have another interview with the Spanish Minister. It will be well to cover the same ground again, employing a few very special suggestions. You may be able to liberate him from the pernicious influence of the British Representative. The Inspector of Police has been informed that our present difficulties are the result of a conspiracy hatched by the Evangelical Society of London. Isn't that so, Señor Inspector?"

"No doubt about it. The Humanity which the Puritan militia invokes is a reasoning being, a euphemism. In order to gain control of mines and finances, English agitators begin by introducing the Bible."

Don Celes nodded his head:

"I am fully informed."

The mummy bent over with rigid circumspection and observed obliquely:

"A distinguished Spaniard cannot stand passively by when there's a question of maintaining friendly relations between the Republic and the Mother Country. Besides, there's an ugly imbroglio with the police. The Inspector has the floor."

The Inspector fixed an eye on Don Celes with a look of funereal derision:

"The humanitarian principles invoked by diplomacy

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may possibly have to be subordinated to the exigencies of a stern reality."

Mused the mummy:

"And in the last analysis the interests of the Spaniards settled in this country run counter to humanity. You can't get away from that! The Spaniards settled in this country represent contrary interests. Make the Minister understand that! Make him wake up to himself! If he shows much reluctance, inform him that in the police archives we have evidence attesting to actual Roman orgies."

Don Celes let out a wail:

"I am astounded!"

Tyrant Banderas twisted his mouth with a disdainful grimace:

"We sometimes get some real swine as representatives of the Mother Country."

Don Celes sighed:

"I'll go see the Baron."

"See him and make him understand that we've got his reputation in our hands. The Minister will think things over. Transmit to him the most courteous salutations of Santos Banderas."

The Tyrant bowed with the rigid and measured movement of a wooden dummy:

"Diplomats are fond of postponements and nothing will come of that first meeting. Well, we shall see what tomorrow brings. The Republic may perish in

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war, but it will never surrender to the impositions of foreign powers."

V

Tyrant Banderas went out into the cloister, and bending over a camp-table, without sitting down, rapidly scratched his signature to the edicts and sentences which the Secretary of Justice, Don Sostenes Carrillo, extracted from his wallet. The whitewashed walls were adorned with daubs depicting the horrors of martyrdom, purgatories, catafalques, and green demons. Putting his scrawl to the last document, the Tyrant opened the dolorous green grimace of his wide Indian mouth and began to speak with slow deliberation:

"Chack! Chack! Señor Carrillo, we owe a little debt to the old canteen wench of the Seventh Light Regiment. In order that justice be done her it is necessary to thrash an army officer. To thrash him like the meanest beggar! And he is one of my most esteemed friends. That damned fool pal of mine, Domiciano de la Gándara. That bandit who will shortly be calling me a despot and have one eye trained on the camp of the insurgents. To chastise this friend is to send him flying; to fail to defend the canteen wench, to go back on the decision I took when I shook hands with her, would be a backdown, a washout. What's your advice?"

"General, that's a Gordian knot!"

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Tyrant Banderas, his mouth twisted in the green grimace, rejoined his retinue of cronies:

"Stand by, friends. Draw up there and give your verdict. Have you heard what I was just saying to Señor Carrillo? You all know my pal: a good fellow and we all like him. To thrash him like a beggar is to infuriate him and drive him into the ranks of the revolutionists. Should he be punished and left free and rankling? Should Tyrant Banderas, as the goddamned rabble calls me, be prudent or magnanimous? Think it over, friends; I'm interested in having your opinion. Form a tribunal and resolve the case with justice."

Adjusting a collapsible telescope, he reclined against the arcade which opened upon the blurry design of the garden, and became absorbed in contemplation of the heavens.

VI

His comrades form a group at the other end and weigh the pros and cons of that scruple of conscience which, as a bone to dogs, Tyrant Banderas has tossed them. Sostenes Carrillo approaches the question with the foxy air of a shrewd attorney:

"What did the General have in mind?"

Nacho Veguillas twists his mouth and bulges out his eyes, imitating the croaking of the frog:

"Quaw! Quaw!"

Major Abilio del Valle throws him a look of contempt and pulls at his goatee:

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"This is no time for horse-play!"

"Major del Valle, it'll have to be a backdown."

Carrillo held to his theme:

"We'll have to divine what's in the General's mind and pronounce judgment accordingly."

Nacho Veguillas persisted in playing the buffoon:

"Quaw! Quaw! I'll be guided by your lights, Carrillo."

Major del Valle murmured:

"To judge it fairly you must all put yourselves in his position."

"Well, what would you do in that position, Major? . . ."

"It depends upon the alternatives."

"Go back on the old woman or give Colonel de la Gándara a hiding."

Still pulling at his beard, Major Abilio del Valle replied banteringly:

"First cook his goose and then give him a hiding—that's my advice."

Nacho Veguillas was overcome with maudlin sentimentality:

"Perhaps the General will take into consideration the fact that he's a friend, and that relationship may temper his severity."

Don Sostenes Carrillo became petulant:

"Major, you be the Alexander of this Gordian knot."

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Veguillas drew a long face:

"The mere smashing up of a stand can hardly be punished with death! I wash my hands of the whole thing. I don't want Domiciano's ghost to come round haunting me. Have you seen the play that Pepe Velero acted in last night, *Fernando el Empecinado*? Well, now, that's an actual happening in the history of Spain."

"Those things don't happen any more."

"Major, they happen every day."

"I never hear of them."

"You never hear of them because the victims are not crowned heads."

"The evil eye? I don't believe in it."

"I used to know a man who would always lose at gambling unless he kept an unlighted cigar in his hand."

Don Sostenes Carrillo sharpened his smile:

"Allow me to recall your attention to the matter under discussion. Now, I suspect that there's some other accusation against Colonel de la Gándara. Our friend has never been too trustworthy and lately he has been very hard up for cash. Perhaps he's been trying to remedy his situation in the revolutionarv camp."

There was a confused whispering:

"It's no secret that he's been conspiring."

"Well, he owes everything he is to the General."

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"As we all do."

"I'm the first to recognize that debt of honor."

"I can never repay Don Santos with anything less than my life!"

"Domiciano has repaid him with the basest ingratitude."

Arrived at an accord, Major del Valle passed round his cigarettes.

VII

The Tyrant swept the sky with his telescope. His skull was white with moonlight.

"Five days before the comet announced by European astronomers will be visible, a celestial event of which we should have no knowledge if it weren't for foreign savants. Possibly in sidereal regions they know nothing of our revolutions either. So we're in the same boat. Señor Veguillas, you will draw up a decree to provide the Nautical and Astronomical School with a good telescope."

Nacho Veguillas drew himself up on his bow-legs, threw out his chest, and stretched out his arm in a gesture of harangue:

"The furtherance of culture is a patriotic work!"

The Tyrant rewarded the vinous cordiality of the wretch with the grin of a humorous death's-head and went on ranging the night-sky with his telescope. And

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the glow-worms kindled their glittering dance in the blurry, moonlit geometry of the garden.

VIII

Fierce and elusive, with the staring eyes of a wild beast, a demented woman in a chemise burst shrieking into the room. A hush fell upon the company; colloquies hung suspended in air. Tyrant Banderas gave a start and, recovering himself, burst into a spasm of anger and abuse. Fearful of punishment, the maid and man-servant who had been pursuing the white-robed figure stopped short at the door. The Tyrant raged:

"You're in charge of this girl, you damned bitch! Fine care you take of her!"

The pair shrank whispering on the threshold. The dim bulk of their figures stood out in smudgy relief against the dense gloom of the doorway. Tyrant Banderas approached the white-robed figure. With the obstinate expression of the lunatic, the girl plunged her nails into her hair and crouched into a corner, howling.

"Manolita, you be a good girl, now. Go to your room."

The white-robed maniac was the daughter of Tyrant Banderas. Young and blooming, of a burnished bronze, little more than a child, her idol's mask with its fixed expression was stamped with a cruel enigma. Bending down, she scurried to shelter beside the

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servants who stood petrified on the threshold. They carried her off with reprimands and disappeared in the darkness. Tyrant Banderas began to pace to and fro, stammering a monologue. At length, coming to a decision, he made a hobgoblin's bow and mounted the ladder:

"Major del Valle, you'd better arrest that damned fool pal of mine tonight."

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PART THREE

A WILD NIGHT

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BOOK ONE

THE GREEN ROOM

I

STUPENDOUS fairs, those of All-Saints and All-Souls! The Plaza de Armas, Monotombo, Arquillo de Madres formed a setting for taverns and bazaars, roulette and card games. The rabble breaks into a run at the news of a free-for-all bull-baiting in Portalitos de Penitentes. Gangs of revelers rush about extinguishing the illuminations, the better to descry the lantern hung to the bull's neck. A clownish moon tempers the darkness of the vast heavens. Oil lamps smoke before the raree-shows, shacks, and stands. Blind musicians with guitars sing amid circles of ragamuffins. Creole ranchmen with ponchos, machetes, and broad-brimmed hats, are stationed around the catchpenny raffles and gaming-tables. The coppery rabble, frowsy and barefoot, circles about in clusters, and on the stairs of the churches Indian potters are selling their little clay bells, decorated with prodigious scrawls and scratches. Youngsters and pious old crones peddle the funereal clay of so mournful a chime that it recalls the case of

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the Peruvian friar. Under the porticoes, in the taverns of half-breeds and Indians, the guitar strums out a ballad of robbers and miracles:

"Don Diego Pedernales
Was of noble lineage."

II

In the brothel of Cucarachita colored lanterns illumined the patio and All-Souls' tapers the Green Room —a union of contrasts achieved by the holidays. Lupita the Romantic, in a beribboned dressing-gown and with hanging hair, sat sighing in a hypnotic trance under the gaze and passes of the Polish Professor. She breathed with vanquished fatigue, sighing in an erotic transport:

"Oh!"

"Answer me, Señorita Medium."

"Oh! He is lighting his way up a great staircase. . . . I can't . . . Now he's gone. . . . He has disappeared."

"Keep on till you find him, Señorita."

"He's entering a doorway where there's a sentry stationed."

"Does he speak to him?"

"Yes. Now I can't see him. I can't . . . Oh!"

"Try to get your bearings, Señorita Medium."

"I can't."

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"I command you."

"Oh!"

"Get your bearings. What do you see round about you?"

"Oh! Great stars as big as moons are racing across the sky."

"Have you left the terrestrial plane?"

"I don't know."

"Yes, you do. Answer me. Where are you situated?"

"Oh, I'm dead!"

"I'm going to resuscitate you, Señorita Medium."

The hypnotist placed the stone of his ring on her forehead. Then came a passing of hands and a blowing on the eyelids of the sleeping strumpet.

"Oh! . . ."

"You are going to awake happy and with no headache. Very fresh and happy, with no painful impression."

He spoke in a routine manner, with the placid murmur of a priest saying his daily mass. The landlady was shouting in the corridor, and in the patio, where the carousal of drinking and dancing was in progress, roistered Colonel Domiciano de la Gándara.

III

Colonel Domiciano de la Gándara tunes the guitar. Simultaneous gapings of shirt and breeches reveal the

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rotund, grinning belly of a Tibetan idol. His bare feet shuffle in slippers and he sports a large hat, whose curving brim discloses a red handkerchief and an earring. Winking an eye, his hand on the fingerboard, he carries on a ribald banter with the inmates, in low-cut wrappers and with hanging hair. Swarthy, strapping, and curly-haired, he wears a sweaty jacket and wide trousers supported by a belt with a big silver buckle. Don Domiciano was always three sheets to the wind, and as he dragged out his existence in taverns and brothels, he was much prone to strife and would grow riotous toward the end of his sprees. Jaded and disdainful, the daughters of Sin took in the chatter from their rocking-chairs, where the red coals of cigarettes disclosed their positions. With a last test of the tuning, the Colonel spits and begins to strum, singing a ludicrous rendering of the popular ballad of "Diego Pedernales." The shadow of his hand with the glitter of his rings adds a flourish of sparks to the flourishes of the music:

"The gendarmes carried him away
Mounted on a sorry nag.
'Twas at the ranch-house of Valdivia
That they took him by surprise.
A maiden's unrequited passion
Had led her to betray him."

IV

A hypochondriacal piano was jangling in the hall known as "The Salon of the Green Room." As the

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dancing was in the patio, the lighted salon looked big and bare, with its gratings open upon the court and the wind in the muslin curtains. A blind musician, nicknamed "Velones," was clawing out livid scales in accompaniment to the singing of a wretched child of the melancholy, gawky ugliness of an asylum orphan. Beside the gratings two negroid dolls were bewailing their losses at gambling. Their features like mellow clay were refined by a softness of line and tint; their ebon hair, bedecked with knots and combs, was an Oriental drama of lacquers and greens. The blind Velones fingered the lampless piano—an owlish piano which passed its days swathed in black flannel. The youngster was singing, the cords of her melancholy neck stretched taut, her face as immobile as that of a little corpse, on her breast the funereal glint of an alms-plate:

"Spare my dreams, O traitorous illusion!
Thy fair image kindles in my longing heart
A devouring flame of purest passion!"

The livid voice in the livid light of the deserted salon was wrenched to unbelievable heights:

"A devouring flame of purest passion!"

A few couples were dancing in the patio, swayed by the rhythm of the *danzón*.* Cheek pressed to cheek, they passed lazily and languidly before the gratings. The Colonel, frowsier than a roustabout, accompanied

* A slow Cuban dance and its music.

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the song on a single string, his voice raised in tremolo:

"Spare my dreams, O traitorous illusion!"

V

The curtain billows its green satin in the archway of the chamber. At one end of the room the reflection of the pompous mercenary bed glitters in the mirror, and from time to time everything totters in a flicker of the altar-lights. Lupita heaved a sigh:

"Saints alive! How sleepy I am! And my head is splitting!"

The mesmerist sought to comfort her:

"That will soon go away."

"The next time I let you hypnotize me it'll be when turtles have hair!"

The Polish Professor, shifting the conversation, congratulated the strumpet with the ceremoniousness of the mountebank:

"You are a very interesting case of metempsychosis. I wouldn't hesitate to promise you a contract for a Berlin theatre. You could become one of the most famous of mediums. This experiment was very interesting!"

The jade pressed her hands to her temples, thrusting her fingers, sparkling with stones, into the sloe-colored strands of her hair:

"Now I've got a headache for the whole night!"

"A cup of coffee will fix you up. . . . Put a drop

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of ether in it and you'll soon find yourself sufficiently toned up to begin another experiment."

"Never again!"

"Couldn't you make up your mind to appear before the public? With proper guidance you'd soon have enough of a reputation to appear in a New York theatre. I'd guarantee you a percentage. In less than a year you'd have diplomas from some of the best academies in Europe. The Colonel told me long ago how your case might be of interest to science. You should submit to the study of experts in the mysteries of mesmerism."

"Not for a wad of bills would I do it! Almost passed out with one experiment!"

"There's no danger of that when you go about it scientifically."

"That blonde that was with you a while ago, people said she died in a theatre."

"And that I was arrested? The slander is patent. I am not in prison."

"You may have sawed off the bars."

"Do you believe me possessed of such powers?"

"Well, aren't you a sorcerer?"

"The study of hypnotic phenomena cannot be considered sorcery. Are you recovering from your cephalic malaise?"

"Yes, it seems to be going away."

The landlady shouted from the corridor:

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"Lupita, they're asking for you!"

"Who is it?"

"A friend. Don't act surprised!"

"I'm coming! If I weren't so hard up I'd lay off tonight out of respect for the departed."

"Lupita, you can make a great success on the stage."

"But I'm awfully scared!"

She flounced out of the chamber with a swish of skirts, followed by the Polish Professor. This necromantic rascal had a show at the fair and was much admired in the brothel of Cucarachita.

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BOOK TWO

ALL SOULS' TAPERS

I

"On a burro of the condemned
They carried him to his doom.
He chucked the hangman under the chin
When they dressed him for the gallows.
To the crucifix they offered him
He made a mason's high-sign."

IN the Green Room, lighted by a little altar with tapers and candles, the naked sinners ceased their whispering and listened. The ballad floated in entangled in the notes of the guitar. The tapers whispered on the altar and the lovers on the pillow:

"He was very wicked!"

"An atheist!"

"On a night like this that chant of executioners and the hanged is gloomier than the grave!"

"A gay life, a sad death!"

"Holy Moses! Where did you get that old crow's voice! Veguillas, if you knew you were dying would you make your confession like a Christian?"

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"I don't deny the immortality of the soul."

"Nachito, we are flesh and spirit. Here just as you see me with all this flesh, I'm very sentimental. If I hadn't been broke I'd have kept this holiday. But I'm awfully in debt to the landlady! Nachito, do you know of any living being that hasn't got his dead? The orphans in the asylums, perhaps, and that's only because they don't know them. This day ought to be kept more than any other. It brings back many memories. If you were really sentimental you'd feel some scruples now. You'd pay me and go away."

"What if I go without forking over?"

"Even so . . . I'm very sentimental. I'm telling you if I weren't so in debt to the landlady . . ."

"Want me to make a clean slate for you?"

"Explain yourself."

"Would you like me to pay off your debts?"

"Quit your kidding, Nachito!"

"Do you owe much?"

"Thirty *pesos*. She's holding back fifteen on me. If you'd take over my debts and set me up with a flat, you'd see a faithful slave!"

"Sorry I'm not a slaver."

The harlot fell into a reverie, studying the glitter of her false jewels. She was ransacking her memory. Words fluttered on her painted lips:

"We had this conversation once before in just the

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same way. Remember, Veguillas? With just the same words and everything."

The sinner became absorbed in meditation, her gaze always fixed upon her rings.

II

There was a noisy strumming of the guitar, singing, outbursts of laughter, a tapping of heels, and hand-clapping. Shouts, racing feet, and slamming doors. The knuckles and the voice of Taracena:

"Lock the door! Domiciano's coming to sing you a song! Lock the door, if it isn't already! He's taken it into his head to go brawling around the rooms!"

Still absorbed in the fable of her hands, the sentimentalist murmured:

"Domiciano, you must take life as it deserves to be taken."

"What about the awakening?"

"Ave Maria! Weren't we saying this same thing a moment ago? Veguillas, when was it you prophesied that about the bad end that was coming to Colonel de la Gándara?"

Veguillas shouted:

"That secret has never crossed my lips!"

"Now you make me doubt. Old Nick took on your form at that moment, Nachito!"

"Lupita, don't be visionary."

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Down the corridor came a growing uproar of song and guitar, jesting and hand-clapping. The Colonel was singing an air of the plainsmen:

"Old pal, Nachito Veguillas,
Absent thee from thy dame a moment,
And come drink a toast to the health
And repose of the dear departed."

"Holy Heavens! Those very same words were sung once before when we were lying here in bed, the same as now!"

Half amused, half frightened, Nacho Veguillas gave the harlot a resounding slap on the hip:

"Lupita, you're altogether too romantic!"

"Don't rattle me, Veguillas."

"You've been kidding me all the evening."

Back came the strumming and singing to the door of the chamber. The little altar of lights and crosses tottered. The prostitute whispered:

"Nacho Veguillas, are you on good terms with Colonel de la Gándara?"

"We're bosom friends."

"Then why don't you warn him so he can get away?"

"What are you driving at?"

"Haven't we been talking about it?"

"No!"

"Do you swear it, Nachito?"

"I swear it!"

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"You say we haven't been talking about it. Then you must have been thinking about it!"

Nacho Veguillas, his eyes starting from their sockets, leapt on to the carpet, improvising a fig-leaf with his hands:

"Lupita, you're in communion with the spirits!"

"Hush!"

"Answer me!"

"You bewilder me! You say we haven't talked over the bad end that's coming to Colonel de la Gándara?"

There was a hammering at the door and a renewed outburst of revelry, with the sound of couplet and guitar:

"Arise from your couch, old sport,
Get up and pull on your breeches.
We'll go stake our cash on a game.
Perhaps we'll double our riches."

The door was flung open with a kick and the Colonel appeared, strumming the guitar, which he rested on his round belly. Nacho Veguillas, in a crack-brained transport of glee, squatted on his heels and hopped about imitating the croaking of a frog:

"Quaw! Quaw!"

III

In the patio of the brothel, adorned with festal illuminations, was assembled a collection of liquor, frit-

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ters, and gambling games. The cards came from the deck with a look of weary interest. The stakes were waning and huddled up on the green baize, under the yellow lamplight, dismayed at the inauspicious aspect of the cards. Observing that the money was so distrustful, Taracena brought on rum and *chicha* to pluck up its courage. Nacho Veguillas, half-dressed, with his waistcoat open and one brace hanging in a tail, hopped round, amid general applause, imitating the duet of the frog and the toad—that classic music so beguiling to the sombre spirit of Tyrant Banderas in his moments of leisure. Nachito received the congratulations of the company with the emotion of a barnstormer, shook the proffered hands, and staggered in and out of epic embraces. Jealous of so signal a success, the Polish Professor began to hold forth amid a group of inmates, gesticulating with a pack of cards opened fanwise. With mellow tropical whispering the attentive strumpets surrounded him in a jaded, beribboned circle. The sad child passed round the alms-plate, stretching taut her melancholy neck, wan and resigned, horrible in her bodice of blue muslin—the livid finery of hunger. Nachito hopped behind her on his heels with great huzza:

"Quaw! Quaw!"

IV

At the break of dawn that wan couple, the blind old owl and the child in the winding-sheet, slipped along

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the Arquillo de las Madres Portuguesas. The illuminations were being extinguished. In Portalitos there was still a straggling remnant of the fair. The merry-go-round was giving its final whirl amid a great yawning of oil lights. The blind old owl and the child in the winding-sheet carry on a grumbling colloquy to the rhythm of their four footsteps:

"Harder times I never saw in my life!"

The girl spoke without altering her spectral expression:

"Perhaps you've forgotten."

The owl shook his head:

"Cucarachita doesn't get in any new women, and that's no way to conduct a business. What do you think of the Panamanian? Is she having success?"

"Not so much, considering she's so young. She's cuckoo."

"Now what does that mean?"

"That's what one of the girls says—the one they call the *Malagueña.* She means she's crazy."

"Don't go picking up the language of those women."

The child in the winding-sheet fixed her sad eyes on a star:

"Could you notice my hoarseness much?"

"Only when you struck the first notes. Tonight you sang with the feeling of a real artist. If it hadn't been for a father's love, I believe you would have made a great success in the concert-halls. 'Spare my dreams, O traitorous illusion.' There you rose to great heights!

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Daughter, you'll really have to begin soon to sing in some theatre and put an end to this hand-to-mouth existence. I could direct an orchestra."

"Blind?"

"I could have the cataracts removed."

"Oh, daddy, how we do dream!"

"Shall we never see the end of this misery?"

"Who knows!"

"Do you doubt it?"

"I'm not saying anything."

"You know no other life, and so you don't mind."

"Neither do you know any other, daddy."

"No, but I've seen it in other people and I know what it must be like."

"If I were to envy anything it wouldn't be riches."

"What would it be, then?"

"I'd like to be a bird. To sing on a branch."

"You don't know what you're saying."

"Well, here we are."

In the corridor the Indian and his squaw lay asleep under a blanket. The spectral child and the blind old owl edged past them. The nuns' bell was calling to prayers.

V

Nacho Veguillas was in the tipsy stage of the drooling mouth and tender eye. Now he is resting his head in the harlot's lap and singing his aria in the Green Room:

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"Bestow your love upon me, O lily fallen in the mire!"

The harlot spoke dreamily:

"First rate! And then you say you're not romantic!"

"Pure angel of love who love inspires! I will drag you out of this abysm and redeem your virginal soul. Taracena! Taracena!"

"Don't go raising a rumpus, Nachito! Let the landlady alone. She doesn't want to be bothered with your nonsense."

She placed her jeweled fingers over his drunken mouth. Nachito sat up:

"Taracena! I'll pay the debt of this lily fallen in the vile mire of your commerce!"

"Be quiet! Don't insult her!"

Sniveling, Nachito turned to the harlot:

"Slake my thirst for the ideal, O angel of the broken wings! Place your hand upon my brow, for I feel my brain burning in a sea of molten lava!"

"When was it I heard those same ravings before? Nachito, those very words were said here once before!"

Nachito felt a pang of jealousy:

"Probably some other bastard."

"Or perhaps I didn't hear them. . . . Tonight it seems to me that everything that happens has happened once before. It's the Souls! . . . This is an

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illusion, that everything has happened before it's happened."

"I used to call to you in my solitary slumbers! The magnetism of your gaze penetrates my being! Kiss me, woman!"

"Nachito, don't be silly; let me say this rosary."

"Kiss me, Jarifa! Kiss me, shameless, innocent child! Give me one chaste and virginal kiss! I was wandering alone through the desert of life, and before me appears an oasis of love in which to rest my weary brow!"

Nachito began to sob, and to comfort him the harlot gave him the kiss of a heroine of romance, pressing to his lips the painted heart of her mouth:

"Silly boy!"

VI

The little altar trembled. A flitting reflection threw the walls of the Green Room out of plumb. Colonel de la Gándara opened the door and unceremoniously entered the room. Veguillas turned his drooling mouth in his direction and cast a soulful eye upon him:

"Domiciano, don't profane this idyl of two souls!"

"Nachito, I recommend to you the ammonia. Look at me free of fumes. Guadalupe, what are you doing that you don't give him the holy water?"

The Colonel's tread made the All-Souls' tapers tremble. The irreverent clatter of his spurs lent a symphonic background of heresy to the blinking altar. A

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signal change was observable in the Colonel's person and attire. His breeches were tucked into riding-boots, his belt was buckled, and his machete swung at his side; he was freshly shaved and the sloe-colored lock above his brow was brushed and shiny:

"Veguillas, old pal, loan me twenty *pesos*, since you've had such luck at cards. I'll give it back to you tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!"

After pronouncing this word, which vanished in the greenish penumbra, Nachito remained in open-mouthed suspense. There came the tolling of a distant bell. The altar lights gave a terrified shiver. Between the curtains the strumpet, a dusky brunette in rose chemise, crossed herself. And Colonel de la Gándara insisted:

"Tomorrow. And if not, when they bury me!"

Nachito burst out sobbing:

"Death is always with us! Domiciano, come to your senses; money won't help you any!"

The harlot came out from behind the curtains, buckling her corset, breasts exposed, stockings stretched taut, and rose-colored garters high on her legs:

"Domiciano, flee for your life! This idiot doesn't tell you so, but he knows that the Tyrant's got you on his list!"

The Colonel clapped his eyes on Veguillas. And Veguillas, with open arms, shouted aghast:

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"Evil angel! Hypnotic serpent! With your intoxicating kisses you have absorbed my thoughts!"

The Colonel made the door in one leap, carefully peering out and listening. He closed it, shot the bolt, and, straddling his legs, drew his machete:

"Bring the basin, Lupita. We're going to give this fellow a bleeding free gratis."

The corseted jade intervened:

"Be sensible, Domiciano. You'll touch him over my dead body. What do you want? What are you doing here, you fool? Are you in danger? Well, then, make for safety!"

Colonel de la Gándara slowly pulled at his moustache:

"Who sold me out, Veguillas? What's going to happen to me? Tell me this instant or I'll give you a passport for Paradise! Come out with it, now, this instant!"

Up against the wall, Veguillas was drawing on his breeches, sullen, and contrite. His hands were trembling. Aghast, he whined:

"Brother, the old canteen wench that's got the stand by the game of frog is the one that informed against you. She's the one!"

"The hell she did!"

"Your bad habit of smashing things up as soon as you get a few drinks has been your ruin!"

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"I'll skin the old witch and make me a drum of her hide!"

"Don Santos promised her he'd give you a thrashing and he gave her his hand on it."

The strumpet broke in:

"Don't waste time, Domiciano!"

"Shut up, Lupita! This bosom friend of mine is going to tell me straight off what court has sentenced me!"

Veguillas whined:

"Domiciano, don't go starting anything! You're not a foreign subject!"

VII

The Colonel flashed his machete over their heads. The harlot in rose chemise shut her eyes and flung out her arms. Veguillas, all atremble, cowered against the wall in his shirt-tail with his breeches in his hand. The Colonel snatched them from him:

"Damn your damned breeches! What's my sentence?"

Nachito crumpled up with his nose on his navel:

"Brother, ask me no more! Every word is a stab! . . . I'm committing suicide! The sentence that you evade will descend upon my head!"

"What's my sentence? Who pronounced it?"

Beside herself, the harlot knelt before the altar:

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"Take to your heels! If you don't, Major del Valle will arrest you right here!"

Nachito's astonishment passed all bounds:

"Fatal woman!"

He sank into a heap, covering even his feet with his shirt-tail. The Colonel raised him up by the hair. With the shirt above his belly, Veguillas waved his arms. The Colonel roared:

"Has Major del Valle got orders to arrest me? Answer!"

Veguillas thrust out his tongue:

"I have committed suicide!"

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BOOK THREE

A MELODRAMATIC THRILLER

I

IT was like a miraculous coincidence of melodrama. The moment the Colonel set foot in the street he spied the muskets of a patrol coming along Arquillo de las Portuguesas. Major del Valle was coming to arrest him! Danger sounds a violent alarm in his breast. Quick and alert, he drops to the ground and crawls across the street on his belly. He dashes through a door half opened by a semi-nude Indian, whose breast is covered with scapularies. Veguillas follows in behind, caught up in a circle of absurd fatalities. The Colonel races up a stairway, bending over like a horseman on his mount. Wallowing over the stairs, Nachito gets the flash of spurs full in the face. At the first door under an attic skylight the Colonel is rapping. It is opened by a half-breed wench, holding a broom. She gives a frightened leap as the two fugitives dash into the corridor. She starts to

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shriek, but the blinding flash of a dagger checks her tongue.

II

At the end of the corridor there is a student's bedroom. With elbows propped on the table, the youth, pallid with much reading, sits meditating over his open books. The lamp is smoking. The window stands open upon the last star. On entering, the Colonel points to it and inquires:

"Where does it lead to?"

The student turns his profile to the window, livid with dramatic surprise. Without waiting for more, the Colonel leaps on to the sill and shouts with frolicksome humor:

"Come on, simp!"

Nachito is aghast:

"The devil!"

"Hip!"

With a roar the Colonel jumps into space. He descends through the air. He drops on a tiled roof. He smashes many tiles. He crawls to safety. Nachito timorously pokes out his nose and his face puckers up in a knot:

"You'd have to be a cat! . . ."

III

And in the brothel chambers flashes the sword of Major del Valle. Followed by soldiers, he strides in

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and out, clanking his gaudy spurs. Protesting and frightened, the landlady, in slippers and with a flower at her ear, bustles along beside him with a great shaking of hindquarters:

"Chief, I come from Cadiz and I don't lie! My word's as good as the King of Spain's! Not half a moment ago Colonel de la Gándarita says: 'I'm going.' In a flash he was gone. Just this minute! It's a miracle you didn't run into one another. He couldn't have got three steps away when the soldiers appeared at the door!"

The Major looked at the old bawd with suspicion and called the sergeant:

"Search the house. Cucarachita, if I find you with the contraband you'll get a hundred lashes!"

"My friend, you'll find nothing."

The landlady jingled her keys. Vexed, the Major ruffled his goat whiskers and, while waiting, stalked into the Green Room. Shouts and alarms, scurrying feet, and a string of bawdy oaths comprised the whole life of the brothel in the ashen light of dawn. With a clatter of heels, Lupita appeared in the archway of the Green Room, on her cheek a fresh beauty-spot. From the painted heart of her mouth she blows the smoke of a cigarette:

"Abilio, you're just to my taste."

"Thanks for the compliment."

"Listen, do you think Domiciano's hiding here?

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You were within an ace of trapping him. Now you can set on your bloodhounds!"

IV

Nachito still stands paralysed by the student's window. Time seems to have prolonged all actions, suspending them absurdly on the apex of a moment, motionless, crystallized, nitid, improbable, as occurs under the influence of *marihuana.* The student behind the table, surrounded by his books, tousled and sleepless, looks on aghast. There before him stands Nachito, open-mouthed, with his hands clapped over his ears:

"I have committed suicide!"

The student is more and more overcome:

"Have you escaped from Santa Mónica?"

Nachito rubs his eyes:

"It's a kind of vice versa. . . . I'm not escaping from anyone, my friend. Here I am. Look at me, my friend. I'm not escaping. . . . It's the guilty one that's escaping. I was only accompanying him. . . . If you ask me why I'm here, I don't know what to tell you. I don't even know where I am. I came up on a blind impulse in the wake of the other fellow you've just seen. I give you my word on it. It's something I can't understand myself. Hypnotism!"

The student gazes at him perplexed, unable to make head or tail of this nightmare imbroglio, through

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which flashes the face of the other who escaped by way of the livid window that all night had stood open with the perseverance of inanimate objects, awaiting the fulfilment of this melodramatic contingency. Nachito sobs, cowardly and effusive:

"Here I am, noble sir. I ask only for a glass of water to calm myself. It's all a dream."

At this his heart leaps into his mouth. From the corridor come an outburst of voices and a clanking of arms. Revolver in hand, the figure of Major del Valle covers the doorway. Behind him, soldiers with muskets.

"Hands up!"

V.

From another door comes a gigantic barefoot woman in petticoat and shawl, with leonine mane and eyes and brows so intense a black that, in spite of her swarthy complexion, they seem of coals and flame: a powerful figure of a Biblical old woman. Her arms, of knotty tendons, have a baroque, statuesque pathos. Doña Rosita Pintado entered in a gust of wrathful vociferation, with frantic expression and gesture:

"What are you doing in my house? Are you trying to arrest my boy? Who orders it? You'll take me instead! Is this a lawful procedure?"

Major del Valle replied:

"Don't go starting anything, Doña Rosita. Your boy

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only has to come along to give his testimony. I guarantee you that once that's done, if he's in no way at fault, he will come straight back here. Don't be afraid of any spite-work. This has all been brought about by circumstances. The boy will be back if he's in no way at fault. I promise you."

The youth cast a frowning glance at his mother, warning her to keep silent. Shuddering, the giantess rushed to embrace him with a desolate gesture of arms. The youth checked her with a firm look:

"Mother, be quiet and don't make a fuss. There's nothing to be gained by shouting."

The mother clamored:

"You're killing me, you Guinea nigger!"

"Nothing can happen to me."

The giantess struggled with herself, floundering in the darkness of doubt and alarm:

"Major del Valle, tell me what's happened!"

The youth broke in:

"Someone they were pursuing burst in here and jumped out of the window."

"What did you say to him?"

"I hadn't even time to see his face."

Major del Valle interrupted them:

"By just making that declaration in the proper place, it will be all over."

The giantess folded her arms:

"Does anyone know who it was that escaped?"

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The voice of Nachito issued from amid alcoholic fumes:

"Colonel de la Gándara!"

Nachito, shiny with tears and mouth a-drip, cowered between two soldiers. Doña Rosita looked at him bewildered and disconcerted:

"Friend, are you crying too?"

"I've committed suicide!"

Major del Valle raises his sword and the squad falls into position, carrying off the student and Nachito between files.

VI

Tousled and haggard, Taracena's women peered through the gratings, straining their eyes to distinguish the prisoners—taciturn shadows behind the gray network of bayonets. The nuns' sexton thrust out his head through the bell-arch. The bugles of barracks and forts were sounding reveille. Paths of sunlight lay upon the waters. Troops of Indians, nocturnal carriers, were entering the city, leading their droves of llamas, laden with wares and produce from the mountain ranches. The pounding herds of wild cattle warmed the mists of dawn. The port was beginning to stir with an ambulatory sound of little bells, and the patrol of muskets vanished from sight with the two prisoners along Arquillo de las Portuguesas. In the brothel the landlady was shouting orders to the inmates to be off to their attic coop, and a menial, with

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a flower in his hair, bustled about changing the linen of the mercenary beds. Lupita the Romantic knelt praying before the little lighted altar of the Green Room. With a pin in his mouth, the menial murmured, the while he studied the folds of the coverlet:

"I haven't got over my fright yet!"

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PART FOUR

NECROMANTIC AMULET

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BOOK ONE

THE FLIGHT

I

IN that critical moment Colonel de la Gándara bethought himself of an Indian who was indebted to him for old favors. Slowing his pace in Arquillo de Madres to avoid awakening suspicion, he headed for the Campo del Perulero.

II

Zacarías San José, by reason of a gash that cleft his cheek, was better known as "Scarface." His hut was situated in a vast morass of dunes and rushes out at a place called "Campo del Perulero." Big birds were pecking about on the muddy borders—the vultures of the Andean plains, the buzzards of the heart of Mexico. A few horses were cropping the herbage along the edge of the canals. Zacarías was working at his pottery, conventionalizing solemn Indian figures. The vast stretch of dunes and rushes swam in the mists of dawn. Hogs were rooting in the quagmire behind the hut, and the potter, squatting on his heels, with a smock and palm-leaf hat as his only coverings, was decorating

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cups and bowls with elaborate paintings. Taciturn under a swarm of flies, he glanced from time to time toward a thicket, where a dead horse was lying. Scarface was not free of superstition: that buzzard that had lighted on the roof and was beating it with its black wings was an evil omen. Another dark portent, the overturned paints: the yellow, that denotes bitterness, and the black, that means imprisonment, when it doesn't presage death, united their trickles in a single stream. And suddenly he remembered that the night before, when his squaw had put out the fire, she had discovered a salamander under the *metate*.* The potter moved his brushes with slow precision, ensnared in a contradictory duality of thought and action.

III

Within the hut the little Indian woman covers her breast and brushes the baby aside. The infant bellows and wallows on the ground. The mother picks it up with a slap and, suspending it by an ear, plants it outside the hut. She pauses beside her husband and attentively watches the strokes of the brush as they decorate a clay cup:

"Why so quiet, Zacarías?"

"What is it?"

"I haven't got a cent in the house."

"I'm going to bake the clay today."

* A stone used for grinding corn and cocoa.

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"And in the meantime, what?"

Zacarías replied with a forced smile:

"Don't go worrying me. Fasting's the proper thing during these holidays."

He stopped short with his brush suspended in mid-air, for at the door of the hut stood Colonel de la Gándara, a finger on his lips.

IV

In a light barefoot trot Zacarías joins the Colonel. Keeping a sharp lookout, they hold a consultation under a writhing aloe:

"Zacarías, will you help me out of a bad scrape?"

"You know it, master."

"My head smells of gunpowder. It's all the envy of my pal, Santos Banderas. Will you help me out?"

"I'll do anything you say."

"How could you get hold of a horse?"

"There's three ways, master. You buy it, you borrow it from a friend, or you take it."

"You can't buy it without money, we have no friend, and where are you going to go to rope a nag? The hounds are on my scent. Look here: my idea was to get you to row me up in your canoe to Potrero Negrete."

"Then the sooner the better, chief. I've got my boat down there in the rushes."

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"I must warn you you're risking your neck, Zacarías."

"Oh, well, for all it's worth, master . . ."

v

The dog goes sniffing round about the writhing aloe, and under the palm thatch the baby, on foot beside its mother, sets up a hungry wailing. Zacarías beckoned to the woman to come out:

"I'm going off with the master."

The little squaw lowered her voice:

"Anything serious?"

"It looks so."

"Remember now, if you're gone long, you're leaving me without a penny."

"Well, what can I do about it, woman? Go and hock something."

"Got nothing to hock unless it's the cot blanket."

"Hock my watch."

"They wouldn't give me two cents for it with the crystal broken."

Scarface unhooked his nickel turnip from its rusty chain. Colonel de la Gándara snatched it from him before the woman had time to stretch out her hand:

"Are you so hard up, Zacarías?"

The woman murmured:

"Everything goes on cards, master. Everything's squandered on this man's mania!"

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"The thing isn't worth two cents!"

The Colonel swings the watch on its chain and with a jovial laugh, sends it flying into the quagmire amongst the hogs.

"Good for you, Colonel."

The little wench looked meekly approving. She had observed the course of the throw with the idea of recovering the watch later. The Colonel took off his ring:

"Here, you can get some cash on this."

The little squaw dropped to her knees and kissed his hands.

VI

Scarface went into the hut to don his breeches and buckle on his belt with its pistol and machete. His wife followed him in:

"A devil of a thing it'd be if the ring should turn out to be false."

"A devil and a half!"

The woman holds out her hand to him, flashing the jewel:

"It sure sparkles! I'll just take it round to a pawnshop and make certain."

"If you only go to one, they might fool you."

"I'll go to several. If it's genuine it ought to be worth almost a hundred *pesos*.

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"You make up your mind it's worth five hundred or it's not worth a cent."

"Shall I take it straight off?"

"What if they cheat you?"

"Pretty thing that'd be!"

VII

From the door of the hut the Colonel scanned the Campo del Perulero:

"Don't lose time, friend."

The Indian came out of the hut with the baby in his arms and his squaw beside him. The woman murmured slavishly:

"When'll you be back?"

"Who knows! Light a candle to the Virgin of Guadalupe."

"I'll light a couple of them!"

"All right, then."

He kissed the baby, rubbing his moustache against its face, and placed it in its mother's arms.

VIII

The Colonel and Zacarías strode along the border of the great canal as far as Pozo del Soldado. Zacarías launched a boat that was beached in the mud and they rowed up the canal under a vaulting of tangled tropic vegetation.

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BOOK TWO

THE RING

I

QUINTIN PEREDA: PAWNSHOP. The little squaw paused before the window glittering with earrings, scarf-pins and cuff-links, adorned with pistols and daggers, and draped with *ñandutís* * and Indian blankets. She stood for some time gazing at all this display. The baby rode on her hip, suspended in her shawl, as in a hammock. She brushed the sweat from her brow and tucked in and smoothed her hair. She entered the door with humble litany:

"Health to you, master. Well, here we are, come to do the master a great favor. You deserve it for your kind heart and 'cause you're the right sort. Just take a look at this little jewel!"

She flashed the ring on her dark hand over the counter, without removing it. Quintín Pereda, the honest *Gachupín,* lowered the paper he was reading to his knees and pushed up his spectacles on to his bald forehead:

* An exquisitely fine fabric used principally for undergarments.

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"What can I do for you?"

"Just tell me what it's worth. It's a handsome ring. Just see, sir, how it sparkles!"

"You don't expect me to appraise it on your finger?"

"Oh, but the master's a great expert."

"I have to test the gold with acid and examine the stone."

The woman took off the ring and reverently placed it in the claws of the *Gachupín*:

"There you are, Señor Peredita."

Huddled up against the counter, she became intent upon the movements of the usurer, who, going to the light, examined the stone with a lens:

"I think I know this ring."

The little squaw became instantly alert:

"It doesn't belong to me. I was sent here by a family that's in a little trouble."

The pawnbroker renewed his examination, emitting a false laugh:

"This little jewel has been here before. You've probably filched it somewhere."

"Master, don't you accuse me of any such thing!"

The usurer lowered his spectacles from his bald forehead, laughing his Judas laugh:

"My books will soon show under what name it was pawned before."

He took down his files from the shelf and began to run over them. He was a malignant old codger

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who in his speech intermingled snares and honey. He had left his country as a boy, and to his native hard-headedness were added the shrewdness of his trade and the Creole sugariness of *mamey*. He raised his head and again pushed up his spectacles:

"Colonel Gandarita pawned this ring last August. . . . He took it out the seventh of October. I'll give you five *pesos*."

With one hand over her mouth the little Indian singsonged:

"How much was it pawned for? You'll give me that very same amount."

"Now don't start any nonsense. I'll give you five *pesos* just to do you a favor. By rights I ought to call the gendarmes."

"Is that so!"

"This ring is not your property. I'll probably lose the five *pesos* and have to return the ring to its rightful owner if he swears out a warrant. I may get myself into a pretty scrape all through doing you a favor that you don't even appreciate. I'll give you three *pesos*. Take them and be on your way."

"Señor Peredita, you must take me for a fool!"

The pawnbroker leaned on the counter with an air of sluggish calm:

"I could have you arrested."

The woman gave a start and eyed him sharply, the baby on her hip and her hands in her hair:

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"Holy Virgin of Guadalupe! I've just been telling you the ring's not mine! It's the Colonel that sent me!"

"You'll have to prove that. Take the three *pesos* and keep out of the cooler."

"Master, give me back the ring."

"Not much. You take those three *pesos* and if I'm mistaken in my suspicions, let the rightful owner come and close the bargain. This little jewel will stay here in deposit. My house is sufficient guarantee of its safety. Pick up the money and get out."

"Señor Peredita, it's an outrage what you're doing to me!"

"You ought to be in the jug."

"Señor Peredita, don't insult me, 'cause you're making a great mistake. The Colonel's in straits and he's waiting for me to bring him the money. If you're afraid to take the ring, give it back to me. Come on now, master. Don't go being mean, 'cause you've always treated me decent before."

"Don't force me to resort to the law. If you don't pick up that money right away and get out on to the sidewalk, I'll call the gendarmes."

The little Indian turned on him, suppliant and rebellious:

"It's not for nothing you're a *Gachupin*!"

"And proud of it! A *Gachupin* won't countenance robbery."

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"But he practices it!"

"You're looking for trouble!"

"Scoundrel!"

"I'm going to give your filthy hide a thrashing!"

"You come from a pretty bad country to have any conscience!"

"Don't you say anything about my country or I'll lose my head!"

The pawnbroker stoops under the counter and gets up brandishing a whip.

II

The blind old owl and the wan child shamefacedly entered the door of the honest *Gachupín*. The little girl halted the blind man by the red curtain of the show-window. The father whispered to her:

"Who is he arguing with?"

"A little Indian."

"We've come at a bad time!"

"Maybe so."

"We'll come back later."

"And find the same scene."

"Then let's wait."

The pawnbroker approached them:

"Come right in. I suppose you've brought the back payments on the piano. You already owe me three."

The blind man whispered:

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"Solita, explain the situation to Señor Pereda, and how we want to do what's right."

The wan child began to recite her speech:

"We wish to do what's right and catch up with the payments."

The *Gachupín* smiled with Judas-like asperity:

"Wishes aren't enough; they should be accompanied by deeds. You're way behind with your payments. I always like to accommodate my customers, even when it goes against my own interests. That has always been my policy and it will be again, but what with the revolution all business is in a bad way. Present conditions are altogether too bad to permit me to make any concession in the clauses of the contract. How much did you think of paying now?"

The blind old owl craned his neck over his daughter's shoulder:

"Explain him our circumstances, Solita. Try to be convincing."

The child murmured sadly:

"We've not been able to get the money together. We wanted to ask you please to wait till the second fortnight."

"Impossible, my pretty one!"

"Just till the second fortnight."

"It hurts me to refuse you. But you have to defend yourself, my child, you have to defend yourself! If you can't pay up I shall regretfully be obliged to take

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back the piano. It might even be a relief to you not to have to worry about making the payments. Everything has to be considered."

The blind man craned over the child:

"Would we lose what we've already paid?"

The pawnbroker reasoned with honeyed sweetness:

"Naturally! And even so I'd be out the costs of carting and the wear and tear of use."

Intimidated, the blind man murmured:

"Give us time till the second fortnight, Señor Peredita!"

The pawnbroker renewed his honeyed reasoning:

"Impossible! These favors will be my ruin! I can't keep it up! I've had to steel my heart to keep from failing in business. If I don't keep a stiff upper lip, between one and the other of you you'll have me reduced to poverty! I can give you until tomorrow, but no more. So see what you can do. Don't be wasting time round here."

The child implored mercy:

"Señor Peredita, give us until the second fortnight!"

"Impossible, my beauty! What more should I wish than to be able to accommodate you!"

"Oh, don't be so Spanish, Señor Peredita!"

"Before you mention my country you scrub off your tongue with a thistle! Don't go starting anything, my child. If you're not all walking around in feathers, you owe it to Spain!"

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The old man stooped over resentfully and pushed the child toward the door.

"Spain may be a great country, but she sends us some damned rotten samples!"

The pawnbroker whacked the counter with the whip:

"Get out of my shop! The Mother Country and her citizens are far above the slurs of a disreputable ragamuffin!"

The wan child hastily tugged at her father's sleeve to get him to the door:

"Daddy dear, don't start a rumpus!"

The blind man thumped the threshold with his stick:

"This old Jew of a *Gachupín* is crucifying us, depriving you of the piano just when you're getting along so well with your music!"

III

The other Indian with the baby on her hip emerged from a dark corner with cautious light step:

"Don Quintinito, don't be so mean! Give me back the ring!"

She stretched out one hand for the ring and with the other motioned to the wretched pair to stay and listen. The pawnbroker whacked the counter with the whip:

"I see you're looking for trouble, you damned fool!"

"Give me back the ring!"

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"Just as soon as my clerk comes in I'll send him to speak to the rightful owner. So have a little patience until this matter's been attended to. My good name should be sufficient guarantee for you. In the meantime the ring will stay here in deposit. Get out on the sidewalk and don't go scattering your lice round here."

The little squaw runs to the door and, all a-flurry, shouts to the haggard pair who are going off with protests and lamentations:

"Listen here! Just come and look how this man's robbing me!"

The *Gachupín* called to her:

"Don't be rowdy. Here, take five *pesos*."

"Keep your money and give me back the ring!"

"Now don't keep on pestering me!"

"Señor Peredita, you don't think what you're doing. What'll happen is my man will come round here and settle accounts with you. Don Quintín, I warn you he's pretty dangerous!"

The *Gachupín* stacked up the five *pesos* on the counter:

"There are laws, there are gendarmes, there are prisons, and in the last resort there's a bullet. I'll pay my fine and rid society of a rascal."

"Master, don't you think he's such a fool as to run any such chances."

"Woman, pick up the money. If, after I've made the investigations the law demands, it should be possible

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to give you a little more, you shall have it. Pick up the money. If you've got any pawn tickets that are about to expire, bring them around and I'll try to extend the time on them."

"Señor Peredita, don't you take me for a fool. You tell me what the ring's worth. Colonel Gandarita has had to go off suddenly on a journey and he's left some little debts behind. Don't think any more about it and just hand me over the full amount."

"Impossible, woman! I'm only making you a difference of fifty per cent. The ring, as you can see by the books, is worth nine *pesos*. You're getting more than fifty per cent."

"Señor Peredita, you're forgetting the zeros."

"Well, in view of the circumstances I'll give you the nine *pesos*. Now don't rile me any more! If it turns out you're telling a lie I'll have to settle the claim of the rightful owner."

In the course of this harangue of the honest *Gachupín's* the little squaw gathered up the nine *pesos*, counted them from one hand to the other and tied them up in a corner of her shawl. Bending over, she went loping off:

"Don Quintinito, your soul will go to hell!"

"Country of ingrates!"

The pawnbroker hung the whip on a nail, dusted off the files with a whiskbroom, and settled down to an effusive enjoyment of the local paper which he re-

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ceived from his Asturian village. "The Avilés Echo" stirred the patriotic tenderness of the honest *Gachupín* to ecstasy. The notices of deaths, weddings, and baptisms brought up before his mind the parties, enlivened by the music of accordions, the wakes with rounds of anisette and chestnuts. The judicial edicts where farmlands were described with their boundaries and crops filled him with rapture, bringing him a vision of the misty landscape: rainbows, winter rains, the sun breaking through the clouds, mountain gorges, and green seas.

IV

Entered Melquiades, the *Gachupín's* clerk and nephew, conducting a troop of youngsters who were jangling the little painted bells of funereal pottery which are sold at the church-doors for All-Souls. Melquiades was dumpy and had the obstinate visage of the emigrant who prospers and saves money. The driveling troop, lining up before the counter, jangled the clay bells:

"Well, youngsters! That's pleasant! Run off to your mama with your clatter! Tell her to change you to your everyday clothes. Melquiades, you shouldn't demoralize them by allowing them to squander their pennies that way. One bell for the four of them would have been quite sufficient. Good brothers always share their toys. Run off to mama and tell her to change your clothes."

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Melquiades herded the troop into the stairway leading to the upper storey:

"Don Celes Galindo made them a present of the bells."

"A good sort! Children, run to your mama and tell her to put them away for you. They're a keepsake and you must save them for the coming years. Now don't be stubborn!"

Melquiades kept watch at the foot of the stairs to see that the infantile herd reached the top without damage to their new garments. This thing of crawling over the stairs was reserved for their everyday clothes. Melquiades stressed his statement, extolling the generosity of Don Celes:

"Those bells are the most expensive ones. There at Arquillo de Madres he lined the kids up and told them to take their choice. Like the fools they are, they went for the most expensive ones. Don Celes took out the money and paid for them without a murmur. He says you're not to fail to attend the meeting of notables in the Casino."

"The bells! Now I'm beginning to pay interest on them! They'll put me on some committee. I'll have to leave the shop from time to time. They'll probably put me down for contributions: a subscription list never fails to make its appearance at such meetings. The Casino is perverting its functions and the purpose of

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its statutes. From a recreative center it has been turned into a house for money-grubbing."

"The Colony is in a ferment!"

"With good reason! Take the stone out of that ring there. We have to disguise it."

Melquiades sat down at one end of the counter and began rummaging in a drawer for his pliers:

" 'The Criterion' has taken a stand against the closing of barrooms which the Diplomatic Corps is agitating."

"Naturally, since it hurts the interests of many of our countrymen. Barrooms are licensed by law and pay a good tax. Has Don Celestino expressed any opinion about it?"

"Don Celes thinks all the Spanish shopkeepers should band together and close down in sign of protest. It's for that they're having the meeting of notables in the Casino."

"Pretty idea! That opinion can't prevail. I'll go to the meeting and I'll register my disagreement. Such a measure would be very injurious to the interests of the Colony. Business exercises a definite social function in every country and this thing of closing down, unless it's a general measure, only means a loss of customers. If, when the occasion arises, the Spanish Minister should approve the closing down of barrooms, he will assuredly make himself unpopular with the Colony. What does Don Celestino say to it?"

"He never mentioned the Minister."

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"This meeting of notables should make it their business to map out a course of conduct for that crazy nut. He needs to be straightened out, and if he won't listen, he'll have to be taught a lesson by our cabling a request for his recall. To such a well justified cause as that, I'd contribute something."

"Who wouldn't!"

"Well, why don't you do it then, you idiot?"

"You leave the matter in my hands and you'll see what I'll do."

"Always arguing, Melquiades! Always arguing! . . . Well, a cable would settle this whole disgraceful situation of the Minister's. A degenerate that every social circle is talking about and whose sweetheart is now in jail!"

"They've turned him loose. The one whom the gendarmes have just arrested is Cucaracha. A fine row she's stirring up!"

"Such riff-raff shouldn't be countenanced by the Consulate. This Cucaracha, with the disreputable business she's carrying on, smirches the good name of the Mother Country!"

"Well, old Cucaracha's in a fine scrape now. She seems to be implicated in the escape of Colonel Gandarita."

"Escape of Colonel Gandarita! Drop that ring! Here's a pretty predicament! Did he escape from Santa Mónica?"

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"He made his getaway early this morning when they went to arrest him in Cucarachita's brothel."

"Escaped! That bitch has made a fool of me! Drop those pliers! Escaped! Colonel Gandarita was a good-for-nothing who was bound to get himself into a scrape. So that's the little trip the damned wench was telling me about! Melquiades, that solitaire belonged to Colonel Gandarita! A trap that drunkard has set for me at the last moment! She got nine *pesos* out of me!"

Melquiades smiled sullenly:

"It's worth five hundred."

The honest *Gachupín* became acrimonious:

"The devil! I'll lose my money unless I want to get in trouble! I'm going to trot straight out to Police Headquarters and report the matter. They'll probably make me hand over the ring and put up a deposit."

He shook his head, reflecting upon the instability of this world and its prosperities and fortunes.

V

Bending down behind the counter, the honest *Gachupín* changed his slippers for a pair of new boots. Then he locked up the drawers and took down his hat from its peg:

"I'm going out to attend to this."

Melquiades sulkily gave counsel:

"Keep your mouth shut and lay low."

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"Yes, and have the gendarmes come down on us in a few minutes. You think of nothing but foolishness! You're never good for a bit of advice in time of trouble, Melquiades! The police will be on the lookout and it wouldn't be surprising if they'd already clapped their hands on that damned go-between. I may find myself implicated in this business if I don't go and report it and abide by the ordinances of General Banderas! Would you take a chance on not abiding by them? Nine *pesos* it's cost me to rely on the good faith of my customers. So now you see what's to be got out of this business, and that in spite of long experience! All through having a little human feeling! I could have given that squaw that did me this dirty trick only three *pesos,* and there I go and put nine in her hand. To make a success of this business you have to be constantly on the alert, nephew, and you'll never get much out of it at that. In Spain you think that money grows on bushes over here in these republics! Now, to avoid getting myself involved in this affair, I'll have to hand over the ring and lose the nine *pesos.*"

There hovered on Melquiades' lips the crafty smile of the Asturian villager:

"You can accompany your report with a cheaper ring."

The honest *Gachupín* stood gazing at his nephew. A sudden, consolatory ray of light illumined the old codger's soul:

"A cheaper ring! . . ."

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BOOK THREE

THE COLONEL

I

ZACARÍAS rowed the canoe under a vaulting of tropic vegetation to the lagoon of Ticomaipú. The morning was gay with an intertwining of festive sounds—metals, rockets, a chiming of bells. The Indians were celebrating the feast of All-Saints. Zacarías dropped the oars into the bottom of the canoe and with a boat-hook grounded on the muddy shore beside a row of prickly cacti which served to make a corral in which were hens, turkeys, and hogs. The Indian murmured:

"We're at Filomeno's place."

"Good work. Let yourself be seen."

"The master is probably amusing himself in the plaza."

"Well, go hunt him up."

"What if he's afraid of getting implicated?"

"Filomeno's a good sort."

"But what if he's afraid and has me arrested?"

"That won't happen."

"You have to be prepared for the worst, master. As

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far as I'm concerned, I'm ready to do all I can for you; and even if they put me to torture, by keeping my mouth shut and sticking it out, that'd be the end of it."

The Colonel spoke jestingly:

"You've had some brilliant inspiration. Come out with it and if it's any good I'll not call you a fool."

The Indian looked over the cactus fence:

"If Don Filomeno is away, my advice is to swipe a couple of horses and be on our way."

"Where to?"

"To the insurgents' camp."

"I've got to get some cash."

The Colonel leaped on to the muddy shore and looked over the cactus fence beside the Indian. The church belfry, flying the tri-colored banner, towered over the cedar and palm trees. The ranch lands, cut up into squares by canals and fences, stretched away in various shades of green, broken by reddish parcels of newly ploughed land. Herds of cows were grazing in the distance. A few horses were cropping the herbage along the borders of the irrigating ditches. A canoe was mounting the canal: there was a bumping of oars. An Indian with grizzled goatee, palm-leaf hat, and canvas smock, was paddling. In the poop sat Don Filomeno. The canoe drew up beside a paling. The Colonel went to meet the ranchman:

"Old man, I've come to have breakfast with you. You're out early, old fellow!"

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The ranchman received him with a look of distrust:

"I slept in town. I went in because I was anxious to hear Don Roque Cepeda's discourse."

They embraced and, like boon companions, alternately suspended one another in the air.

II

Sauntering side by side along a lane of lemon and orange trees, they came within sight of the big ranch-house. It had a portico of whitewashed arches and a flooring of flaming red tiles. Numerous bird-cages hung from the beams of the porch, and the master's hammock was swung in the cool shade. The walls were shrouded with blue creepers. The Colonel and Filomeno were ensconced in the portico in twin chairs made of cane and palms—the handiwork of the Indians of the plains—in the breeze of the doorway, a Japanese curtain for background. The master ordered the Indian of the grizzled goatee to set out the breakfast service, and the negro wench to steep the *mate*.* Chino Viejo returned with a plate of lean mutton and in the Cutumay tongue explained that the mistress and children were out, having gone to attend the special services at the church. The master signified his approval with a glance and passed the mutton to his guest. The Colonel speared half a rib with a big knife which he took from his belt, and putting it on his plate, raised

* A South American plant resembling holly, the leaves of which are steeped to make a tea.

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the bottle of *chicha* to his lips. He repeated this operation three times, becoming more and more animated:

"Old man, I'm in a scrape!"

"Out with it!"

"That damned Banderas has taken it into his bald pate to cook my goose. A bad draw and a losing trick, as the Holy Fathers say. So here you see me, my friend, stranded and fleeing from tyranny! Filomeno, I'm going over to the insurgents to fight for the liberation of the country, and I've come to ask your assistance, for you're not in accord, either, with this ignominious rule of Santos Banderas. Will you help me?"

The ranchman fixed his keen black gaze on Colonel de la Gándara:

"You've got what you deserve! This ignominious rule that you're now condemning has lasted fifteen years. What have you done in all that time? You never thought about your country while you were in the good graces of Santos Banderas. And it's just possible that you're not thinking of it now and have been sent here to get some information out of me. Tyrant Banderas makes spies of you all."

The Colonel got up:

"Filomeno, stab me with a dagger, but don't plaster me with mud! The meanest wretch may at some moment become a saint. This is my moment. I'm disposed to shed the last drop of my blood in sacrifice for the liberation of my country!"

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"If this tale you've come here with is false, I leave you to fight it out with your own conscience, Domiciano. It's little harm you can do me, disposed as I am to set fire to the ranch and enter the campaign with my peons. So now you know all about it. Last night I attended the meeting and with my own eyes saw them carry off Don Roque Cepeda, handcuffed, between horses. I have witnessed the passion of the just and the mockery of the gendarmes!"

The Colonel regarded the ranchman with a tipsy eye. The broad grin of a gluttonous, drunken idol inflated his fat, rubicund cheeks:

"Filomeno, the security of citizens is pure rot! It'll be a long time before Don Roque Cepeda sees the light of day again if they shut him up in Santa Mónica. He has the masses with him, but the barracks haven't been properly worked. With only the votes of the Indians he can never hope to win the coming election for the Presidency of the Republic. I've been engaged in revolutionary propaganda and they've found me out. I tear off my mask before they finish me off. Old man, together we'll cook General Banderas' goose! Filomeno, old man, you're an ignoramus in military matters, and you need the advice of an expert. I hereby appoint you my aide-de-camp. Filomeno, tell the wench to sew on your captain's stripes."

Filomeno Cuevas smiled. He was dark and aquiline,

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with wolfish teeth and inky moustache and brows; in figure, steely, well-formed, and distinguished.

"Domiciano, what a pity it would be if my peons shouldn't want you for their leader, and should lose their heads and carry out the order to finish you off!"

The Colonel gulped down a swig and drew a long face:

"Filomeno, you're taking an unfair advantage of your position and you're trying to make a fool of me."

His companion replied jocosely:

"Domiciano, I recognize your ability and I'll appoint you my bugler, if you know the scales."

"Don't go pulling my leg, brother. In my position such jests are mortal offenses. Never in your life will you see me occupying a position inferior to your own. We'll say good-bye, Filomeno. I trust you'll not refuse me a mount and a guide. A little cash wouldn't be amiss, either."

With an air of friendliness, though the bantering smile still played on his lips, Filomeno Cuevas rested his hand on the Colonel's shoulder:

"Don't back out now, old man. You still have to harangue the peons. If they acclaim you as their leader I'll turn over the command to you. And in any case we'll make the first marches together until the chance of a skirmish presents itself."

Colonel de la Gándara puffed up with self-importance, and imitated the sly air of the ranchman:

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"Old man, you've done enough for me already without my starting to quarrel with you over a gang of peons. It's your privilege to lead them to the slaughter, since you're their master and you pay them with your money. So drop the bunk and give me a horse, because if they catch me here the two of us will wind up in Santa Mónica. Don't forget they're on my trail."

"Someone will tip us off if they show their noses round here. I know the risks I'm taking in conspiring and I'm not going to be caught napping."

The Colonel smiled in amiable approval:

"That means we can have another swig. To have sentinels posted at strategic points is in keeping with good military tactics. I congratulate you, Filomeno!"

He spoke with the nozzle of the flask in his mouth, lolling in his chair with a paunch as rotund as that of a Tibetan god.

III

The empty house, the rooms in deserted penumbra, were stirred by a merry sound of voices. The melodious laughter of happy childhood peopled the doorways and corridors. The ranch mistress, fragrant with the odor of incense, came in unpinning her mantilla, surrounded by a scattered troop of youngsters. Colonel de la Gándara sprawled in his chair snoring, his Bacchic belly stirring with the measured rhythm of the terrestrial globe. The ranch mistress exchanges a glance with her husband:

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"What is this person doing here?"

"He has come here seeking a refuge. From what he says, he has got into trouble and is down on the list of undesirables."

"Well, what happened to you? You've had me worried—waiting all night for you! . . ."

The ranchman fell into a gloomy silence, and the hard glitter of his dark eyes, like blued steel, softened to an amiable gleam:

"Because of you and the children, I'm not doing my duty as a citizen, Laurita. The meanest Indian that shoulders a musket in the ranks of the insurgents is a better patriot than Filomeno Cuevas. I should have shaken off my family ties and not have contented myself with being a mere sympathizer! Laurita, the poorest wretch that fights in the revolutionary ranks makes me feel a coward in my own eyes—and all to spare your feelings. Laurita, I work and make money, while others risk their lives and fortunes in defence of our liberties. Last night I saw Don Roquito carried off between bayonets. If I lie down now and don't shoulder a musket, it means I've got neither nerve nor dignity. I have made up my mind and I want no tears, Laurita!"

The ranchman fell silent and suddenly his dark gaze resumed its aquiline glitter. The ranch mistress crouched against one of the pillars with her handkerchief over her eyes. The Colonel stretched his arms

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and yawned: suspended in alcoholic vapors, he emerged from sleep to a hilarious reality. Observing the ranch mistress, he rose to greet her, crowned with the laurels of Bacchus and Mars.

IV

Chino Viejo was signaling to his master from behind a fence, over which peeped the ears of two saddle-horses. With few words the master and his overseer mounted and rode out to the fields at a smart gallop.

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BOOK FOUR

THE HONEST GACHUPÍN

I

WITHOUT a moment's delay the honest *Gachupín* betook himself to Police Headquarters. Following the judicious advice of his nephew, he accompanied his report with a ring of low-carat gold and false stone, which at a liberal estimate could hardly be worth ten *pesos*. Colonel López de Salamanca congratulated him upon his civic spirit:

"Don Quintín, this help which you have so spontaneously lent to the police investigation deserves all praise. I congratulate you upon your meritorious conduct in not hesitating to come to this office and make your declaration, accompanying it with very interesting evidence. You will be so kind as to elucidate a few details of the matter. Are you acquainted with the wench who brought you the ring? Any information regarding her place of residence which you could give us might greatly assist us in effecting her capture. It seems undeniable that when the fugitive interviewed

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the woman he already knew of the warrant for his arrest. Do you suspect that he went straight out to find her?"

"It's possible."

"Then you reject the hypothesis of an accidental meeting?"

"Well, who knows?"

"Do you know where this wench resides?"

The honest *Gachupín* pretended to ransack his memory:

"I declare I do not."

II

The honest *Gachupín* was craftily considering whether he might not be exposing himself to difficulties: he was afraid of complicating matters and revealing the substitution of the ring. The Colonel gazed at him fixedly with a suspicious, sarcastic smile and the air of the omniscient sleuth. The pawnbroker was frightened and mentally began to curse Melquiades:

"We always make some annotation in our books. I'll look them over. I can't guarantee that my clerk has attended to that detail. The youngster hasn't much experience—he's only recently come over from the Mother Country."

The Chief of Police rested his hands on the table and leaned over to the honest *Gachupín*:

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"I should regret having the carelessness of your clerk occasion you a heavy fine."

The pawnbroker swallowed his anger:

"Colonel, supposing such an omission to have occurred, your men will not be lacking ways and means of discharging their duty. The wench lives with a rascal who has occasionally visited my establishment and you're pretty sure to have some record of him, since he has not always conducted himself as a peaceful citizen. He's one of the bandits who took advantage of the amnesty some time ago when the covenant was drawn up with the officers, conceding them commissions in the Army. He has recently been lying low, pretending to work at his pottery."

"Do you know the fellow's name?"

"I may be able to remember it later."

"His description?"

"He has a scar on his face."

"Isn't that Scarface Zacarías?"

"I'm afraid of giving you false information, but I'm inclined to think that's who it is."

"Señor Peredita, your assistance is most valuable and I congratulate you once again. I believe we're on the scent. You may go, Señor Peredita."

The *Gachupín* suggested:

"How about the ring?"

"That has to accompany the attestation."

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"Shall I lose the nine *pesos*?"

"Present your claim to the Court of Justice. That's the proceeding, but undoubtedly your right to an indemnity will be recognized. Present your claim, Señor Peredita. Good-day!"

The Police Inspector rang the bell. A gawky clerk appeared, sweating, pen in ear, collar wilted, tie hanging loose, his drill jacket with black oversleeves spattered with ink. The Colonel scribbled off a memorandum, stamped it, and held it out to him:

"Proceed double-quick to the capture of this couple and warn the police to take every precaution. Select those that have nerve enough to face a fusillade, and tip them off to the fact that Scarface Zacarías is a tough customer. If there's anyone available who knows the fellow, give him the preference. Hunt up the bird's description in the rogues' gallery. Señor Peredita, good-day. Very praiseworthy, your assistance!"

He dismissed him with a shade of irony. The honest *Gachupín* went off with bowed head. His last glance, like that of a whipped dog, was cast at the table where the ring was irremediably foundering in a sea of papers. Having carefully impressed his instructions upon the clerk, the inspector went to a window that gave upon a patio: presently a squad of gendarmes marched out with rapid step. The corporal, a half-breed, with a forked beard, was a veteran of the band of highway-

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men, headed years ago by Colonel Irineo Castañón, "Peg-Leg."

III

The corporal distributed his men in pairs round about the hut in the Campo del Perulero. He stepped to the door with cocked pistol:

"Zacarías, you are under arrest!"

From within came the frightened voice of the little Indian wench:

"The scoundrel's gone and abandoned me! Don't go looking for him round here! The swine's found something more to his taste!"

The dim figure, cowering behind the *metate*, beat about the bush with a singsong plaint. The squad of gendarmes gathered round the door, pointing their pistols at the interior of the hut. The corporal ordered:

"Come out of there!"

"What do you want with me?"

"Want to put a flower in your hair."

The corporal chaffed her with a swaggering air to amuse and calm his men. The little squaw came out of the hut with the baby on her hip and her hair hanging over one shoulder, barefoot and submissive:

"You can ransack every corner. The scoundrel's gone away and he's left me nothing but some old sandals for the baby to inherit."

"My lady, we're veterans and you can't put that stuff

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over on us. Now then, little one, you pawned a ring belonging to Colonel de la Gándara."

"I got hold of it by the merest chance. I found it."

"You are going to appear before my superior officer, Colonel López de Salamanca. Set down that baby and mark step."

"But can't I take the baby?"

"Police Headquarters is not an orphan asylum."

"But who am I going to leave it with?"

"Measures will be taken to send it to the Asylum."

The infant, crawling on all fours between the gendarmes, made off to the quagmire. Frantically the mother shouted to it:

"Naughty! Come here to mother!"

The corporal entered the hut, pointing his pistol at the darkness:

"Careful, now! Any of you who volunteer to make the search, step forward. Careful! That rascal's liable to open fire on us! Who knows if he's not hidden somewhere in here! Scarface, give yourself up! Don't start anything because you'll only make a bad matter worse!"

Surrounded by the gendarmes, he entered the hut, pointing his pistol at the dark corners.

IV

The search completed, the corporal left the hut and clapped a pair of handcuffs on the little Indian, who

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sat huddled up in the doorway, sighing, with her petticoat thrown over her head. They pushed her rudely to her feet. The baby was wailing in the slimy marsh, surrounded by the grunting hogs. Shoved along by the gendarmes, the mother looked back with heart-rending cries:

"Come on, baby! Don't be afraid! Come on! Run!"

The baby ran a few steps and again stood still, calling to its mother. A gendarme turned round and shooed it off. The infant stood hesitant, wailing and beating its fists against its face. The mother shouted hoarsely:

"Come on! Run!"

But the child never moved. Standing on the edge of the irrigating ditch, he sobbed, watching the distance which separated him from his mother grow ever greater.

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BOOK FIVE

THE RANCHMAN

I

FILOMENO CUEVAS and Chino Viejo reined their horses before a hut and went indoors. Shortly other horsemen began to arrive, silver trimmings on bridles and hats. They were the proprietors of neighboring ranches and secret partisans of the revolutionary cause. Filomeno Cuevas had summoned them to the meeting. These comrades were aiding him to smuggle in the arms for his uprising with his gangs of peons. This contraband had been buried for several days in Potrero Negrete, and Filomeno felt the time had come to remove the munitions from their hiding place and equip his bands of Indians with cartridge-belts and muskets. Little by little, at discreet intervals, other horsemen made their appearance—foremen and overseers, Indian rangers and cowboys from the nearby ranches. With jesting nonchalance, Filomeno Cuevas began drawing up a list of the company. He declared himself in favor of taking the field without delay. Already he had

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secretly decided to arm his gangs of peons that night with the muskets hidden in the jungle, but dissembled his purpose with cunning prudence. A discussion ensued during which the Creole ranchmen each in turn voiced their fears. But in view of their comrade's determination, they consented to aid him with horses, cash, and peons. However, this would have to be done with the greatest secrecy to avoid incurring the wrath of Tyrant Banderas. Dositeo Velasco, who as the richest of the ranchers had at first been the least inclined to run the hazard, finished up by taking fire, after the coffee and *chicha*, and hurling defiance at the Tyrant:

"Banderas, you bastard, we'll distribute your carcass along the roads of the Republic!"

The coffee, the *chicha*, and the abundance of hot tamales provoked an identical humor in the other members of the revolutionary gathering and a unanimous outburst of bravado. Amid noisy merriment they toyed with the concept. Gentle and courteous, they apologized for their ribaldry. Good fellows all, they chucked each other under the chin with friendly effusion:

"Good luck, old pal!"

"Be good, old man!"

"Adiós!"

"Adiós!"

Mounted in their saddles, they harangued each other

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with final adieus and, wheeling their horses, scattered at a gallop along the vast horizon of the plains.

II

The morning sun flooded the sprouting crops and the red parcels of newly ploughed land, the thickets of evergreen oaks and prodigious stretches of jungle, where bulls lay steaming in the paths of shade. Framed by an encircling Indian camp, the lagoon of Ticomaipú was a mirror of flaming sheaves. The master gallops his sprightly dappled mount along the fringe of a canal and the ranch overseer spurs on his nag behind. Rockets and pealing bells gladden the hot morning. A fleet of canoes, bedecked with streamers, foliage, and flowers, is ascending the canal, laden with Indian revelers. The fragile flotilla comes near to capsizing in the exultation of music and dancing. A wild troop with pasteboard masks, sashes, pikes, and shields, is performing a harlequins' dance under the canopy of the principal canoe. A drum and an ophicleide mark the measures of pirouettes and figures. The great ranchhouse appears in the distance. Against the green of the dark orange groves, roofs and terraces give off a tiled radiance. The horses quickened their gallop, eager for the stable. Halting in the road while the overseer opened the gate, the master raised himself in his stirrups and peered under the arches. There, lolling in a hammock, the Colonel is strumming a guitar and

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making the children dance. Two coppery wenches in low-cut smocks are laughing and jesting behind the kitchen grating, adorned with geraniums. Filomeno Cuevas caracoles his horse, flicking him on the croup with his whip. He enters the inclosure at one bound:

"Well played, friend! You make Santos Vega look sick."

"Can't compare with you. . . . Well, what's the news? Going to let me be captured, old man? What have you decided upon?"

The master dismounted at one leap and entered the arcade with jingling silver spurs and an Indian blanket flung over one shoulder. The embroidered brim of his broad hat shaded his aquiline face with its goatlike whiskers:

"Domiciano, I'm going to furnish you with fifty *pesos*, a guide, and a horse, so you can make your escape. Before, when you were haranguing me with all those yarns, I spoke of our making the trip together. But I've changed my mind. The fifty *pesos* will be handed over to you as soon as you set foot in the revolutionary lines. You'll go unarmed and the guide has orders to finish you off if you give him the slightest cause for suspicion. I advise you not to divulge it, old man, because it's a secret order."

The Colonel calmly sat up, smothering with his hand a wail of the guitar:

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"Filomeno, drop the bunk. You know very well, brother, that my dignity will not permit me to accede to such a disgraceful capitulation. Filomeno, I did not expect such treatment from you! From the friend that you were, you've become a Cerberus!"

With elaborate forbearance Filomeno Cuevas tossed his blanket and hat on to a chair. He then drew from his breeches a dapper silk handkerchief and wiped his brow, red and white between his black hair and the sunburned tones of his face:

"Domiciano, let's not have any trouble! You'll take what you get without naming conditions."

The Colonel opened his arms:

"Filomeno, in your bosom there does not beat a magnanimous heart!"

He expressed himself with tipsy pathos and the sentimental, heroic speech of the tropics. The master, still preserving his air of banter, stretched himself out in the hammock, picked up the guitar, and began to tune it:

"Domiciano, I'm going to save your life. I'm not absolutely convinced that it's in any danger, and so I take my precautions. If you're a spy, you may be sure it will cost you your life. Chino Viejo will put you safe and sound in the camp of the insurgents and they'll decide what to do with your old hide. It just happens that I have urgent need of sending a message to the faction, so you and Chino Viejo can take it. I thought

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of making you bugler under my command, but things have shaped themselves differently."

The Colonel drew himself up, haughty and martial:

"Filomeno, I consider myself your prisoner and I'll not stoop to a discussion of conditions. My life is in your hands: you may take it, if it's not too much trouble. You're setting a fine example of hospitality to these youngsters! Little ones, don't run away. Come here a moment and learn how you receive a friend who comes to you destitute, in search of a refuge in order to escape death at the hands of the Tyrant!"

The troop of children stood in a row, their ingenuous, frightened eyes staring in attentive suspense. Suddenly a little girl, whose skirt formed a pompous hoop between two big, open-mouthed boys, burst out weeping, entering into the drama of the Colonel. Out rushed the grandmother, a swarthy old woman of Italian blood, with a knot of white hair, eyes like coals and a Dantesque nose:

"Cosa c'e, amore? What has happened?"

The Colonel had already captured the child and was kissing her and rubbing his beard against her face. He straightened up, rotund, lifting the weeping infant in his arms and twisting his voracious figure with so violent a contortion that it almost parodied the gluttony of Saturn. The child wriggles and wails ever louder in a struggle to free herself. Against the Japa-

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nese curtain, shawl awry, the grandmother bristles with rage. The Colonel baits her with alcoholic humor:

"Don't go getting huffy, old girl; it's bad for the liver."

"Then don't frighten the *bambina*, you great barnstormer!"

"Filomeno, explain to your mama-in-law what's happened. Tell her about the lesson your offspring are setting you, the example of this angel. Don't try to back out of it, now. Explain it all to your mama. Have the courage of your convictions."

III

The five youngsters set up a unanimous chorus of wails. In their midst the Colonel, with widespread legs and arms, distorts his great face with a grimace and pretends to sob, his chest inflating and deflating like a bellows:

"My tender buds, you are setting an example of civility to your progenitors! Children, never forget this fundamental lesson when it comes your turn to take your part in life. Filomeno, these tender offspring will reproach you, like remorse, for the uncharitable spirit you have shown toward me. Domiciano de la Gándara, a bosom friend, awakens not the slightest echo in your heart! He expected to be received like a brother and he gets worse treatment

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than a prisoner of war. He's not even permitted to carry arms, nor is his word of honor any guarantee. Filomeno, you treat your brother damned swinishly!"

The ranchman, still tuning the guitar, motioned to his mother-in-law to take the children away. The old Italian woman herded the flock into the doorway. Filomeno Cuevas crossed his hands on the fingerboard and cast a sharp gaze at the Colonel, on his purplish lips a smile of forced calm:

"Domiciano, you're wasting your time in not becoming a parliamentary orator. You'd reap great applause. I regret I'm not clever enough to appreciate your talent and I maintain all the conditions of my ultimatum."

A frowsy Indian, his face shaded by a large hat, approached the master and spoke to him in a low voice. Filomeno called the Colonel:

"We're in a tight fix. We've got Federal troops near the ranch."

The Colonel spat, twisting his head over his shoulder:

"Just give me up and get into the good graces of Banderitas. Filomeno, you've disgraced yourself!"

"Don't rub it in. You know very well I've always been ready to help a friend. And my suspicions are well justified by the favor the Tyrant has shown you. But now, in view of what's happened, I'll save you if it costs me my head!"

"Give me a horse and some money!"

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"Don't think of trying to flee."

"Just let me find myself in the open with a good mount!"

"You'll stay right here until night."

"Don't refuse me a horse!"

"If I refuse you it, it's because I'm determined to save you. You're going to be penned up until night in a hole where the devil himself couldn't find you."

He pulled the Colonel into the shadowy hallway.

IV

Along the arcade slipped another Indian, who entered the door crossing himself. He approached his master with barefoot tread, silent and wary:

"They're levying troops. I was on the verge of being roped. They're beating the drum right now in the Campo de la Iglesia."

The ranchman smiled and gave his friend a thump on the shoulder:

"I'm going to pen you up anyway for safety's sake."

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BOOK SIX

THE LARIAT

I

BEACHING his canoe in the tangled vegetation, Scarface Zacarías stood up in the boat and gazed toward the hut. The expanse of morass and dunes, broken by luminous patches of bulls and horses, stretched away between meadows and fields of giant fennel. The cupola of the sky gathered up the sounds of rustic life in its vast, sonorous silence. The hogs launched their chorus of grunts and squeals on the turquoise day. A dog was whining plaintively. Startled, Zacarías whistled to it. The animal bounded frantically toward him, grief-stricken, shaken with human anguish. With its paws on the Indian's breast it nuzzles him mournfully and, tugging at his smock, drags him from the boat. Scarface cocks his pistol and walks on with dark misgiving. He passes before the hut, open and silent. He enters the quagmire. Wheezing painfully, the dog urges him on, twitching its ears, every hair quivering, its muzzle lifted in a desolate tumult. Zacarías follows on. The hogs are grunting in the mire. The hens

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scurry in a panic under the writhing aloe. The circling vultures that hover with drooping wings over the stagnant waters, soar aloft, assailed by the dog. Zacarías stopped. Grim, horror-stricken, he picks up a bloody mass of flesh. That was all that was left of his baby. The hogs had devoured its face and hands. The vultures had plucked out its heart. The Indian returned to the hut. He put the remains in his knapsack and, placing it at his feet, sat down at the door and began to ponder. So quiet he sat, the flies quite covered him and the lizards sunned themselves at his side.

II

Zacarías got up with a dark presentiment. He went to the *metate*, turned it over and saw a faint glitter of silver. The pawn ticket, folded in four, lay below. Never altering the expression of his Indian visage, Zacarías counted the nine coins, put the money in his belt, and spelled out the words on the paper: "Quintín Pereda. Loans. Buying and Selling." Zacarías went back to the door, put the knapsack on his shoulder, and set out for the city. The dog trotted beside him with bowed head and lowered tail. Zacarías walked along a street of low houses with gaily-colored roofs and trimmings, and plunged into the luminous uproar of the fair grounds. He stopped at a gaming table and staked his nine *pesos* on a game of lansquenet. Doubling his stakes, he won three times. He was struck with an

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absurd thought, another presentiment, a gruesome presentiment: the sack on his shoulder was bringing him luck! He went away, followed by the dog, and entered a tavern. There he sat with the sack at his feet, drinking aguardiente. The blind man and the little girl were eating at a nearby table. People went in and out: roustabouts and half-breed wenches, Indian peasants and old women in quest of a penny's worth of cumin seeds for their rolls. Zacarías ordered a dish of stewed turkey, which he shared from his plate with the dog. Then he went on drinking, his sombrero over his face. He divined with frozen consciousness that those remains insured him against all hazard. He presumed they were looking for him to arrest him, but he was untroubled by the slightest fear, chilled by a cruel sense of security. He put the sack on his shoulder and shoved the dog up with his foot:

"Porfirio, we'll make the *Gachupín* a visit."

III

He stopped and again sat down, struck by the whispering of the owlish couple:

"Don't you think Señor Peredita will give us more time?"

"There's not much hope of it, daddy."

"If he hadn't been so riled with that little Indian, he might have been more considerate."

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Zacarías, his sombrero over his face and the sack on his knees, pricked up his ears. The blind man had extracted from his pocket a wallet full of old papers and was rummaging through them as if his black nails had sight:

"Read me over the terms of the agreement again. There must be some clause in our favor."

He held out to the girl a written and stamped sheet of paper:

"Daddy, how we do dream! The *Gachupín's* got the noose around our necks."

"Read over the agreement."

"I know it by heart. We're lost, daddy, unless we find some way of catching up with the back payments."

"How much do they amount to?"

"Seven *pesos*."

"What hard times! At other fairs seven *pesos* were nothing. In a single night such as yesterday you could collect at least three times that sum."

"I can't remember any better times than these."

"You're only a child."

"Some day I'll be old."

"Don't you think we ought to go back again and beg him to help us? Perhaps by explaining to him our plans for you to start singing soon in the concert-halls . . . Don't you think we ought to go back and see him?"

"All right."

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"You say it without hope."

"Well, I haven't any."

"Oh, daughter, you give me no consolation. Even Señor Pereda has got a heart."

"He's a *Gachupín*!"

"Amongst the *Gachupines* there are some men of conscience."

"Señor Peredita will drive us to the limit without pity. He's very mean."

"But you'll admit that he has been more considerate on other occasions. He was furious with the little Indian and he must have had his reasons when they've clapped her in jail."

"Another one that's paying for Domiciano's faults!"

IV

Zacarías turned toward the forlorn couple. Convinced that the girl was not reading the contract, the blind man put it back in his wallet of black oil-cloth. The old owl's countenance wore a flaccid look of weary resignation. The girl was holding out her plate to Zacarías' dog. Velones continued:

"Domiciano's got us into a pretty fix. If it wasn't for Domiciano, Taracena would still be running her business and she could have advanced us the money or guaranteed the payment."

"If she didn't refuse."

"Oh, daughter, do leave me just one gleam of hope!

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If you'd allow me, I'd order a bottle of *chicha*. Don't refuse me! We'll take it home and it will inspire me to finish the waltz that I'm dedicating to General Banderas."

"Daddy, you want to get drunk!"

"Daughter, I need something to cheer me up."

Zacarías picked up his bottle and filled their glasses.

"Tank up. It's the only way to endure this hellish existence. What happened to the little squaw? Did someone report her?"

"What else?"

"Was it that damned *Gachupín*?"

"He didn't want to get involved."

"All right! You just leave Señor Peredita to me!"

He put the sack on his shoulder and went his way, with the dog at his side and his sombrero over his face.

V

Scarface went out slowly, threading his way among the crowd of churls and drovers that were drinking in the saddle at the tavern door. Morose and gloomy, with a painful hammering at his temples, his green visage immobile, he plunged into the hubbub and clamor of the fair. Here there was also a horse-market. Cedars and palm trees formed a support for the stands where harnesses, dirks, and ponchos were displayed. He approached a broad, dusty lane, filled with covered wagons and luncheonettes. Mounted yokels were dis-

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porting their horses in showy sprints, laying wagers, and lying to each other in an effort to get the better of the bargain. Zacarías, standing in the dust under a cedar, fixed his gaze upon a roan nag which an old rustic was putting through its paces. He patted the winnings in his belt and signaled to the rider:

"Is that nag for sale?"

"It is."

"How much are you asking for it, friend?"

"Much less than it's worth."

"No joking. Will you take fifty *pesos* for it?"

"Fifty per hoof!"

Zacarías insisted in a monotonous singsong:

"Fifty *pesos*, if you want to sell it."

"That's not a fair price, friend."

"I stick to it."

Zacarías' voice and expression never varied. With the monotonous insistence of falling drops of water, he repeated his offer. The rustic wheeled the horse with brilliant curvets:

"You can manage him with a thread! Look at his mouth and you'll see he's young."

Zacarías repeated in his unchanging singsong:

"I won't pay more than fifty *pesos*. Sixty with the trappings."

The rustic leaned over the saddletree, patting the horse on the neck to quiet it:

"Seventy *pesos*, pal, and the drinks on me."

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"Sixty with the saddle and the rope and spurs thrown in."

The peasant animatedly strove to effect a compromise:

"Sixty-five, then, and you're getting a jewel, old man."

Zacarías put the knapsack down at his feet, unfastened his belt and sitting down in the shade of the cedar, counted out the money on a corner of his poncho. Swarms of flies blackened the sack, spotted and viscous with blood. The dog went sniffing blear-eyed round about the horse. The peasant dismounted. In no hurry to close the bargain, Scarface tied up the money in a corner of his poncho and examined the horse's teeth and legs. Mounting in the saddle, he trotted about, trying it out in sprints and reining it up short by the bridle, as in roping a bull. The rustic stood beside the dusty lane and, shading his eyes with his hand, watched the performance. Zacarías slowed down and approached him.

"He suits me."

"He's a jewel!"

Zacarías untied his poncho and counted out the money coin by coin into the rustic's hand:

"Good-bye, friend."

"You're not going off like that without having a drink on it?"

"I'm off, friend. I can't delay."

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"That's a hell of a thing!"

"I have to get back home. I promise you we'll have that drink some other time. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. Take care of the nag, old man."

The fair grounds vibrated in a colorful resplendency. Along the twilight roads of red earth moved undulating droves of llamas, herds of cows, and troops of horsemen, with the setting sun on their silver-embroidered sombreros. Zacarías spurred his way out of the tumult and entered Arquillo de Madres.

VI

Scarface Zacarías concealed his face under his broad hat. A grim resolution darkened his spirit, a solitary thought, insistent, inseparable from the painful hammering that was cleaving his temples. And he formulated this thought mentally, unfolding it with childish repetition:

"Señor Peredita, I'll take care of you! I'll take care of you, Señor Peredita!"

When he passed a church he crossed himself. The raree-shows were lighting their lamps, and, passing a shed of wild animals, he felt his horse's flanks quiver. The tiger, scenting the flesh and blood, reared up roaring behind the thick bars of his cage, lashing his tail, his infuriated head glaring through the gratings with eyes ablaze. Alert, Zacarías put spurs to his horse. He had dropped his poncho over the ghastly burden resting

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on his saddletree. Scarface fell into a lethargy under the monotonous insistence of his thought, unfolding it with sickening obstinacy to the measures of the neuralgic throbbing at his temples, in time with its shuttle-like rhythm:

"Señor Peredita, I'll take care of you! I'll take care of you, Señor Peredita!"

The streets were filled with a chromatic dynamism of hawkers' cries, lanterns, streamers, and guitars. Scarface avoided those scenes of scuffles and outcry. The coppery rabble flowed along in an undulating stream under the colored lanterns, trickling in rills, eddying before taverns and barrooms. The figures were unified in an expressive and monotonous synthesis, enervated amid the florid cruelty of the tawdry display. The dancing, the music, the strings of lanterns held an absurd exasperation, the irritation of an hallucinatory chimera. Plunged in a rancorous and taciturn gloom, Zacarías felt the fluttering of his thought, insistent and monotonous, bringing back again the refrain:

"Señor Peredita, I'll take care of you! I'll take care of you, Señor Peredita!"

VII

The street was lighted by a lantern which revealed the shop legend printed on the panes: "Don Quintín's Pawnshop." The third pane was cracked and here the letters could not be deciphered. The red and yellow

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percale of the Spanish flag adorned the doorway. Within, a lamp in a little green petticoat lighted up the counter. The pawnbroker was stroking his cat, an old yellowish Maltese, which, surpassing absurdity, resembled its master. The cat and the pawnbroker stared at the door with an identical look of alarm. Arching itself up on its master's knees, the cat rested its velvet paws on two symmetrical patches of new cloth. Señor Peredita was wearing oversleeves, his pen behind his ear and, tilted over the same organ, the greasy skull-cap which his daughter had embroidered years ago in the convent.

"Good evening, boss!"

Scarface Zacarías—poncho and sombrero, horsehide boots and spurs—bent over his saddletree and brought his horse halfway through the door. The honest *Gachupín* stared at him with a look of niggardly distrust:

"What can I do for you?"

"Just want to have a word with you."

"Tie up your nag outside."

"He's ungovernable, boss."

Señor Peredita went out from behind the counter:

"Well, let's hear what you've come about!"

"Only to get acquainted, boss! You're pretty famous around my parts. Only to get acquainted! I've come in to the fair only for that purpose, Señor Peredita."

"You've been guzzling too much, and it's a disgrace-

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ful thing for you to come round here and insult a man of years. Be on your way before I shout for the watchman!"

"Señor Peredita, don't be scared. I've got to get out a piece of jewelry."

"Have you got the voucher?"

"Take a look at it!"

Bringing his horse through the door, Scarface placed the spotted and blood-soaked knapsack on the counter. The *Gachupín* gave a start:

"You're drunk! You fellows go out and guzzle more than you can carry and then go round making trouble in the shops. Pick up that sack and get out!"

Scarface's head was almost touching the beams. From breast to face his figure was in shadow, and his hands and saddletree were thrown into relief by the counter lamp.

"Señor Peredita, didn't you ask for the voucher?"

"Don't pester me!"

"Open the sack."

"Get out with your foolishness and leave me in peace!"

Scarface grimly insisted in a voice muted with cold rage:

"Boss, just open the sack and you'll see."

"What do I care about it? Goat or pig, that's your affair."

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The *Gachupín* cowered, seeing the shadow of Scarface fall upon him.

"Señor Peredita, do you want me to make you open that sack with your teeth?"

"Look here, fellow, don't come round here with any of your roughhouse. If there's anything I can do for you, come back when you've sobered up."

"Boss, we'll settle this right now. Remember the little squaw that pawned a ring here for nine *pesos*?"

The honest *Gachupín* artfully pretended not to understand.

"I don't recall it. I'd have to go over the books. Nine *pesos*? It couldn't have been worth any more. My shop gives the highest estimates of any."

"You mean there are still bigger thieves! But that's not what I've come about. Boss, you reported the little squaw to the police."

With a palsied blink, the *Gachupín* shouted:

"I can't remember every transaction! Get out, now! Come back when you're sober! I'll see if I can give you a little more!"

"This matter's going to be settled right now. Boss, you reported the little squaw to the police and we're going to have it out!"

"Come back when you're not so drunk."

"Boss, we're only mortals, and sometimes your life is no surer than the flame of that lamp. Boss, who got the little squaw into jail? Haven't you seen the empty

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hut? Well, you'll see it! Haven't you opened the sack yet? Go to it, Señor Peredita, and don't be slow about it!"

The honest *Gachupín* began to undo the knapsack. The old codger wore a look of indifference. Really, it didn't matter to him whether it contained a goat or a pig. He gave a horrified leap on seeing the gnawed and rigid head of the baby:

"A crime! You're trying to get me to shield you! Get out! Don't go getting me in trouble! Go away! I'll not say a word. You damned fool, don't go getting me involved in this! What can you offer me? A few lousy pennies! You damned idiot, a man of my position doesn't jeopardize himself for a few lousy pennies!"

Zacarías spoke with the calm voice of an abysmal rage:

"That's the body of my baby. Your cursed report got his mother in jail. They left him alone to be eaten up by the hogs!"

"It's absurd for you to come round here to me with that string of accusations. A horrible spectacle! A great misfortune! Quintín Pereda is not responsible for this occurrence. I'll give you back the ring. I'll forget about the nine *pesos*. That means that you'll be profiting by my money! Pick up those remains. Bury them. I can understand now why you tried to console yourself with drink. Go away. Come round

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tomorrow and get the ring. Give those remains a Christian burial."

"Don Quintín, you bastard, you're coming with me!"

VIII

Scarface jerks back his horse with sudden violence, and the noose of the lariat drops round the neck of the terrified *Gachupín*. He flounders, waving his arms. As the horse wheels about there is a tempestuous wrenching of bodies, a simultaneous rending. In a wild curvet of his mount Zacarías dashes out into the street. A clatter of hoofs, and the puppet goes bouncing over the cobbles, strangled at the end of the lariat. The rider, bending over his saddletree and driving his spurs into the horse's ribs, feels at the taut rope the tugging of the body as it goes bounding over the cobblestones. And in his stoic Indian sadness Scarface Zacarías is consoled.

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BOOK SEVEN

NECROMANCY

I

AT the ranch of Ticomaipú the horses stand ready for the flight. Colonel de la Gándara is dining with Don Filomeno. Toward the end of the meal the ranchman asks to have his children brought in. Sad and silent, Doña Laurita goes out to fetch them, and presently the merry troop comes bounding in, heedless of their mother who with melancholy countenance raises a monitory finger to her lips. The master, too, felt his fortitude shrouded in gloom. His eyes were fixed on the tablecloth. He looked neither at his wife nor his children. Recovering his poise, he raised his head with austere firmness.

II

The children, in the circle of lamplight, suddenly fell silent, sensing trouble in the atmosphere:

"Children, I have worked to build up an estate for you and to keep you from the hard roads of poverty.

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I have traveled them and I don't want you to have to do the same. Up to now this has been the one aim of my life, but suddenly I've changed my way of thinking. My father left me no money, but he left me a name as honorable as the best, and this heritage I want to pass on to you. I hope you will cherish it more than all the riches in the world. If you should fail to do so, it would cause me the greatest shame."

The ranch mistress moaned:

"You're leaving us forever, Filomeno!"

The master silenced her with a glance. The circle of his children surrounding the table had an emotional glitter in their eyes, but they shed no tears.

"I ask your mama to have the courage to hear me through. I had thought until today that I could be a good citizen in working to build up your fortunes, without sacrificing anything to the service of my country. But now my conscience begins to trouble me. I don't want to have to feel ashamed of myself in future years, nor do I want you to be ashamed of your father."

The ranch mistress sobbed:

"You are going to join the revolutionary army!"

"Together with this comrade."

Colonel de la Gándara jumped up with a swaggering air and stretched out his arms to him:

"I'll be damned if you're not a Spartan gentleman!"

The ranch mistress murmured:

"What if you're killed, Filomeno?"

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"Then you'll bring up the children and teach them that their father died for his country."

There flashed through her mind the tumultous images of the revolution: deaths, conflagrations, tortures, and remote, like an implacable divinity, the mummy of the Tyrant.

III

Before the dark grating, fragrant with the scent of sweet basil, Scarface Zacarías reined his mount. He had appeared in a sudden gallop, startling the nocturnal countryside:

"I'm off, Colonel! I'm off! My little squaw was reported to the police. The damned *Gachupín* has paid for it. I'm off!"

Zacarías curbed his horse and anxiously thrust his dark countenance, his voice excited, through the gratings. All within turned to the window. The Colonel queried:

"Why, what has happened?"

"The blackest sorrow of my life! Of an evil star was the sparkle of the ring! I'm off, Colonel, because the hounds are on my trail!"

IV

The ranch mistress embraces her husband, and the children, clinging to her skirt, begin to whimper. The old grandmother bursts shrilly into the room:

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"What's all this rumpus? If Filomeno has luck in the revolution he may become a Garibaldi! Don't frighten the children!"

Scarface peered through the gratings, his figure enveloped in shadow. The great eye of his horse caught at moments a glint of light in the play of silhouettes that moved about, breaking the luminous circle of the lamp. Zacarías still carried the sack with the remains of his dead baby crossed on his saddletree. Indoors, the family group surrounded the master. The mother lifted the children one by one and placed them in their father's arms. Zacarías commented in a feeble tone:

"They're a part of your very being!"

V

Chino Viejo brought up the horses. The echoes of their gallop rolled along the nocturnal countryside. At the first pause, as they were about to ford a stream, Zacarías brought his horse alongside the Colonel's:

"Banderas is finished! We have a powerful ally! I've got it here with me!"

The Colonel looked at him, suspecting he was drunk:

"What do you mean, old man?"

"The remains of my youngster. A bloody relic the hogs have left me. I've got it here in my knapsack."

The Colonel stretched out his hand to him:

"How sorry I am to hear that, Zacarías! How is it you haven't buried the remains?"

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"In due time."

"It doesn't seem right to me."

"These remains are a safe-conduct for us."

"That's a superstition."

"Ask the damned *Gachupín* if it is, chief!"

"What have you done?"

"Strangled him. That's the least I could do after this slaughter of my baby!"

"You must bury it."

"When once we're safe."

"And he seemed such a smart little devil!"

"At least his father thought so!"

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PART FIVE

SANTA MÓNICA

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BOOK ONE

BOX SEATS

I

THE Fortress of Santa Mónica, which in revolutionary struggles had so often been used as a prison for political offenders, bore an awesome legend of poisoned waters, dungeons swarming with reptiles, balls and chains, and instruments of torture. These fables, dating from the days of Spanish dominion, had gained great credence under the tyranny of General Santos Banderas. Every afternoon at sunset, when the bugles were sounding retreat, a group of revolutionists was lined up in the moat of the ramparts and dispatched by a firing-squad. Executions were carried out with no other formality than a secret order of the Tyrant's.

II

Nachito and the student passed through the postern between the squad of soldiers. The warden of the fortress took them in charge with no other process than a verbal report sent by Major del Valle from the canteen and conveyed by a sergeant. On entering the

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postern the two handcuffed prisoners raised their gaze and cast one long look at the remote, vivid sky. The warden of Santa Mónica, Colonel Irineo Castañón, appears in the records of those times as one of the cruelest henchmen of the Tyranny. He was a ruptured, bloodthirsty old man, who smoked a pipe and hobbled about on a wooden leg. Jocose and unfeeling, in slovenly undress, he took the prisoners into custody:

"Happy to receive such select personages!"

Nachito responded to this sarcasm by showing his teeth in a false laugh. He attempted to explain:

"There's been a mistake made, Colonel."

Colonel Irineo Castañón emptied his pipe by thumping it against his wooden leg:

"That's no affair of mine. Señor Carballada's in charge of drawing up the indictments. For the present, as you're still only under arrest, you'll be given the run of the whole walled inclosure."

Nachito expressed his gratitude with another obsequious smile and finished up sniveling:

"This whole business is a pure nightmare."

Corporal de Vara jingled his keys in the shadow of the doorway. He was a lanky mulatto with the automatism of a puppet. He wore a battered French *képi,* red military trousers, and a sweaty bobtailed jacket. His old patent-leather shoes were cracked across his bunions. The warden jovially gave him his instructions:

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"Don Trini, see that these two worthies get first-class places."

"They'll have nothing to complain of. If they're here only temporarily we'll give 'em box seats on the wall."

After complying with the formality of frisking the prisoners, Don Trini conducted them along a vaulted passage with muskets in cabinets. At the end he opened a barred door and turned them loose within a walled inclosure:

"You can stroll about at your pleasure."

Obsequious and servile as always, Nachito smiled:

"Many thanks, Don Trini."

With absolute indifference, Don Trini slammed the bars shut with a grinding of locks and keys. As he went off he shouted back to them:

"There's a canteen if you want anything and care to pay for it."

III

With a sigh Nachito began to read the scrawlings on the walls, decorated with phallic symbols. Behind him the taciturn student was rolling a cigarette. There was a derisive twinkle in his eye, and on his purplish lips, of the color of blackberries, a half-smile of arrogant compassion. Some few prisoners were strolling scatteredly about alone. The seething of the waves could be heard, as if they were undermining the

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foundations. Nettles flourished in the dark corners, and in the transparent blue circled a flock of vultures, ebon birds. Nachito drew himself up on his bow-legs and looked reproachfully at the student:

"Your silence isn't very comforting to your comrade, and might even be considered a lack of generosity. Tell me your name, my friend."

"Marco Aurelio."

"Marquito, what's to become of us?"

"Who knows!"

"This is awe-inspiring! You can hear the thunder of the waves! . . . It's as if we were on shipboard."

The Fortress of Santa Mónica, a great theatrical old castle with fortifications of the days of the viceroys, reared its bulk upon the reefs of the coast, facing the vast equatorial ocean, obscure with cyclones and calms. Along the barbican a few ancient mortars, leper-gnawed by the brine, were lined up, speckled with the shirts of the prisoners spread out to dry. On the steep wall, facing the vast ocean, an old man sat patching his blanket. On the topmost bastion a cat was hunting lizards and platoons of Indians were drilling in Punta Serpientes.

IV

On a line with the wall the foamy curve of the waves balanced a row of corpses: bloated bellies, tumefied lividities. Some of the prisoners were clambering up the ramparts with mutinous outcry. The waves rocked

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the corpses, girding them to the side of the walls, and the high, blazing sky sheltered a foul flight of vultures in the cruel indifference of its turquoise. The prisoner who was patching his blanket broke off the thread, and holding it in his blubber-lips, murmured, scurrilous and sarcastic:

"The goddamned sharks are fed up on so much revolutionary meat! And still that bastard Banderas isn't satisfied, curse his guts!"

His leathery face, graved with wrinkles, wore an expression of stoicism. The unshaven, ashy stubble of his beard lent a certain funereal air to his stern visage. Nachito and Marco Aurelio wandered about aimlessly, like strayed travelers. If a prisoner passed near him, Nachito would solicitously step aside and make way for him with a friendly smile. They reached the rampart and leaned over to look at the sea, gay with the glitter of morning, necromantic with the funereal row of corpses balancing on the greenish foam of the recoil. Amongst the prisoners perched on the ramparts the mutinous clamor was waxing fiercer, accompanied with wrathful looks and brandishing arms. Nachito was stunned with horror:

"Are they shipwrecked sailors?"

The old man of the blanket looked at him with contempt:

"They're the comrades they've recently finished off in Foso-Palmitos."

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The student inquired:

"Haven't they been burying them?"

"Not much! They've been throwing them into the sea. But now that the sharks are getting cloyed with so much revolutionary flesh, they'll have to bury the rest of us that are waiting our turn."

He laughed an angry, bitter laugh. Nachito shut his eyes:

"Are you condemned to death, old man?"

"Does the Tiger of Zamalpoa ever inflict a more merciful punishment? Death! But I'll not flinch! I stick to my guns! Down with the Tyrant!"

The prisoners perched on the rampart plunged their gaze into the dissipated greens formed by the recoil of the waves between the buttresses. The group was in a quivering frenzy, bellowing a clamorous abuse. Doctor Alfredo Sánchez Ocaña, poet and lampooner, a famous revolutionary orator, broke loose with his arm flung out in a gesture of harangue, under the black gaze of the sentry who, shouldering a musket, was pacing up and down the postern:

"Heroes of liberty! Martyrs of the noblest of causes! Your names will shine resplendent in letters of gold in the pages of our history! Brothers, those who are about to die salute you and present arms!"

He snatched off his hat with a mighty gesture and everyone imitated his action. The sentry cocked his musket:

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"Get back there! You're not permitted to hang round on the ramparts!"

Doctor Sánchez Ocaña apostrophized him:

"You vile slave!"

A boat manned by marines struck sail and began manœuvering to gather up the corpses. Seven were hauled on board. And as the prisoners still remained on the ramparts in ever increasing mutiny, the guard marched out and cornets were sounded.

V

Nachito, seized with convulsions of terror, caught hold of the student's arm:

"This is the end of us!"

The old man of the blanket gave him a long look and a goatlike laugh burst from his blubber-lips:

"This hellish existence isn't worth all that anguish."

Nachito brought out a thin voice which broke on a sob:

"It's sad to die innocent! Appearances condemn me."

With a jeering grin, the old man hammered away at him:

"So you're not a revolutionist? Well, then, without deserving it you're going to meet the end of an honorable man."

Weak with anguish, Nachito turned a supplicating eye upon the prisoner who, frowning over the blanket

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spread across his knees, had set to studying the geometry of a patch. Nachito attempted to win the good graces of the leathery old man. Chance had thrown them together under a fig-tree in a corner of the patio:

"I've never been a sympathizer with the revolutionary ideals and I regret it. You are heroes, I know, and will go down in history. Martyrs to an idea. You know, my friend, Doctor Sánchez Ocaña makes very pretty speeches!"

The student echoed his remark with gloomy fervor:

"The best minds of the Republic work on the side of the revolutionists!"

Nachito fawningly agreed:

"The best!"

And the old man of the blanket, threading his needle, disdainful and surly, slowly commented:

"Well, to discover that fact there's manifestly nothing like making a visit to Santa Mónica. From what I observe, the boy isn't a revolutionist either."

Marco Aurelio replied firmly:

"I am sorry I haven't been, and I will be if I ever find myself outside these walls."

The old man knotted his thread and laughed his goatlike laugh:

"Hell is paved with good intentions."

Marco Aurelio looked at the old conspirator and thought his words so sane that he felt no offense.

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They sounded to him like something logical and irremediable in that prison of political offenders proud to die.

VI

The weltering sea beat against the walls and the oboe of the waves sang the triumph of death. The ebon birds circled in the remote zenith and the fugitive shadow of their flapping wings was painted on the flags of the patio. Marco Aurelio felt ashamed of the life he had led, dandled in his mother's lap, as absurd and irresponsible as the postures of dolls cast aside forgotten after play. His indifference to political problems gnawed at his conscience like an opprobrium. Those walls, the prison of fiery revolutionists, weighed on his spirit, intensifying his sense of his own paltry existence, infantilized between family tenderness and pedantic studies rewarded with prizes in the classroom. Confused, he listened to the old man as he thrust his upholsterer's needle in and out of the blanket:

"Have you been locked up for some good and sufficient reason, or have you been put here to spy on our conversation? That question, my friend, it would be well to clear up. Go round the cells and see if you can find someone to answer for you. Didn't you say you're a student? Well, here there's no lack of university men. If you want to make friends in this dungeon, try to find some way of explaining yourself. Little trust can be placed in platonic revolutionists."

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The student had turned deathly pale. Nachito, with a doglike gaze, implored clemency:

"I, too, was horrified by Tyrant Banderas. Altogether too bloody! But it wasn't easy for me to break my chains. I'm no good at heroics and who would have taken me in if I can't even earn my bread and butter? The General used to throw me a bone to gnaw and amused himself gibing at me. At bottom he seemed to esteem me. You'll say that's all wrong, that I'm an idiot, that that was contemptible, that human dignity must be defended. All right. But think what it is for a man to be deprived of will power by the law of heredity. My papa, alcoholic! My mama, hysterical! The General, in spite of his insults, used to be amused hearing my silly sallies. Many people envied me. And now, to fall from such a height!"

Marco Aurelio and the old conspirator listened in silence, glancing at each other from time to time. The old man announced his verdict:

"There are individuals viler than whores!"

Nachito was in the depths of despair:

"This is the finish! This last indignity passes all bounds. He never went so far before. To amuse one's self shooting a miserable orphan is worthy of Nero! Marquito, and you, my friend, I'd thank you to finish me off right now. I'm suffering too much. What's the use of my living a few hours longer if all the pleas-

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ure's taken out of it by this cursed panic? I know what my end will be; the spirits have warned me. The spirits have had a hand in this nightmare mix-up. Marquito, finish me off; put me out of this nervous agony! I renounce my life beforehand. What are you doing, old man, that you don't stab me with that mending needle? Go ahead, drive it into my gizzard! What do you say, friends? If you're afraid of the consequences, then do me the favor of trying to console me."

VII

This pusillanimous lamentation of the cowardly wretch brought an ambiguous look of compassion and disdain to the solemn visage of the old conspirator and to the curious pallor of the student's face. The degradation of the buffoon fallen from grace had a certain grotesque solemnity, like the mock burials that end the Carnival. The vultures drooped their foul wings over the fig-tree.

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BOOK TWO

CELL NUMBER THREE

I

CELL number three was a room with high barred loopholes, reeking with the stench of alcohol and tobacco. In a row hung the hammocks of the prisoners, in the majority political offenders, though the mess was not lacking the soulless hypocrite, nor the swaggering ruffian, nor the gray-haired thief, nor the sanguinary idiot. To render confinement more grievous for the political prisoners, Colonel Irineo Castañón, he of the peg-leg, vexed them with such companionship. The high, dusty light slid along the dirty, whitewashed walls, and the wan countenances of the prisoners found their supreme valuation in that arid and desolate light. Doctor Sánchez Ocaña, verbose and declamatory, his arm habitually raised in oratorical frenzy, was disgorging eloquent apostrophes against the Tyranny:

"The evil phenix of Colonial absolutism arises from its ashes, scattered to the four winds, disturbing the shades and the manes of our august liberators. Au-

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gust, yes, and the example of their lives must be our light in these moments, which are perhaps our last on earth. The sea gives up its heroes. The voracious monsters of the blue deep show themselves more merciful than General Santos Banderas . . . Our eyes . . ."

He stopped. Down the corridor came the wooden leg. The warden passed through smoking his pipe, and little by little the alarm of his limping step died away in the distance.

II

A prisoner who had been stretched out in his hammock reading, now brought to light the hidden book. From a neighboring hammock the shadow of Don Roque Cepeda engaged him:

"Still on the 'Famous Escapes'?"

"One has to study the classics."

"You seem greatly absorbed in that book. Are you dreaming of escaping?"

"Perhaps."

"It wouldn't be a bad trick to play on old Peg-Leg."

The reader closed the book with a sigh:

"Useless to think of it. They'll probably shoot us both this afternoon."

Don Roque rejected this idea with ardent conviction:

"About you I don't know . . . But I shall live to see the victory of the Revolution. Perhaps later on it

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may cost me my life. Perhaps. One cannot escape one's destiny."

"Undoubtedly one cannot. But do you know your destiny?"

"I shall not meet my end in Santa Mónica. I've lived half a century. As yet I've done nothing. I've been a dreamer, and necessarily I must redeem myself by struggling for the masses. I shall die once I have redeemed them."

He spoke with the fervent inspiration of the dying who, receiving the eucharist, are comforted by their faith in a future life. His bronzed head, like that of a pastoral saint, rose from the pillow as in a resurrection, and his figure was outlined by the sheet as by a shroud. The other prisoner gazed at him with a friendly expression of derision and doubt:

"I should like to have your faith, Don Roque! But I fear they'll shoot us both in Foso-Palmitos."

"That's not my destiny. And now drop your dismal ponderings and go on dreaming of your escape."

"We are very different. You passively wait for some unknown power to open the bars to you. I make plans for my escape and I work them out without ever freeing my imagination of the presentiment that my end is near. This idea gnaws at the very depths of my being. Only so as not to give up, I keep on seeking an opportunity that I myself do not expect to find."

"Our destiny can be overcome if in combating it

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we are able to summon all our spiritual powers. There exist in us latent forces, potentialities of which we are unaware. For your present state of mind I should recommend you some more spiritual reading-matter than those 'Famous Escapes.' I'm going to get you 'The Theosophic Path.' That will open up to you new horizons."

"I've just been telling you that we're very different. All those complexities of your writers leave me cold. It may be I'm lacking in religious spirit. That must be it. For me, everything finishes in Foso-Palmitos."

"Well, recognizing yourself so devoid of the religious spirit, you will always be a very mediocre revolutionist. One must look upon life as a sacred seed which is given to us that we may make it fructify in benefit of all men. The revolutionist is a seer."

"I concede you that."

"From whom have we received this existence with its definite import? Who has stamped it with that obligation? Can we betray it with impunity? Can you conceive of there being no punishment?"

"After death?"

"After death."

"I make no attempt to answer such questions."

"Perhaps because you do not formulate them to yourself with sufficient earnestness."

"Perhaps."

"And the enigma, doesn't that overawe you?"

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"I try to forget it."

"But can you?"

"I have been able to do so."

"And now?"

"Prison is always contagious. . . . And if you keep on in that vein you'll have me reciting a Credo."

"If it troubles you I'll drop the subject."

"Don Roque, your teachings can be nothing but agreeable to me. But among so many learned flowers you have concealed a thorn which is still smarting me. Why do you think that my revolutionary activities must always be mediocre? What relationship do you find between the religious spirit and political ideals?"

"Old man, they're the same thing!"

"The same thing? That may be. I can't see it."

"If you will become more meditative you will understand many truths which only in that way can be revealed to you."

"Every individual is a universe, and we two are very different. Don Roque, you fly very high, and I have my feet fixed on the ground. But when you call me a mediocre revolutionist, you are under a misapprehension. Religion is foreign to our political struggles."

"To none of our actions can the intuition of eternity be foreign. Only those men whose every step is guided by that light can achieve a place in History. The religious emotion is the intuition of a transcended eternity.

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And the cornerstone of our political ideals—the emancipation of the Indian—is a fundamentally Christian sentiment."

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity was, I think, the slogan of the French Revolution. Don Roque, we're very good friends, but we can't arrive at an understanding. Didn't the French Revolution preach atheism? Marat, Danton, Robespierre . . ."

"Profoundly religious spirits, even if at times they themselves didn't know it."

"Blessed be such ignorance! Don Roque, concede me that same category and remove the thorn."

"Don't be angry with me. I concede you it."

They shook hands and, side by side in their hammocks, fell into a long silence. Doctor Sánchez Ocaña, surrounded by a group of prisoners at another end of the room, was still holding forth. The garrulous flow of his tropes and metaphors laid bare his cold affectation in the atmosphere, heavy with sweat, alcohol, and tobacco, of cell number three.

III

A group had gathered round the hammock of Don Roque Cepeda, intent upon the lessons of trustful hope which he poured forth in a low murmur and with a bright, seraphic smile. Don Roque was profoundly religious, possessed of a faith forged of mystic intuitions

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and Hindu maxims. He lived in a state of ardent exaltation and his wordly pilgrimage seemed to him fraught with recondite obligations as ineludible as stellar laws. Adept in Theosophic doctrines, he sought in the innermost depths of his spirit a link with universal consciousness. The eternal responsibility of human actions overawed him with the vast wafting of a divine breath. For Don Roque, men were fallen agents. Culprits of a celestial crime, they purged their sins along the paths of time, which are the paths of the world. Human lives, in their every action, in their every moment, awakened eternal resonances, which death sealed with a cycle of infinite responsibilities. These souls, on shuffling off their mortal coil, reviewed their earthly past with the limpid and hermetic vision of pure consciousness. And this cycle of eternal contemplation—joyous or painful—was the fixed end of human destiny and the redemption of the fallen angel. The peregrination in the clay was linked with a sacred number. Each life, however humble, was the creator of a world, and on passing under the arch of death, the cyclic consciousness of this creation took possession of the soul which, imprisoned in its center, became static and contemplative. Don Roque was a man of very broad and disconcerting reading which, following the path of Theosophy, bordered on cabala, occultism, and Alexandrian philosophy. He was about fifty years of age. His inky brows lent an accent of austere energy

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to his broad brow—the burnished bald pate of a Romanesque saint. His body revealed the solid structure of the skeleton, of the dramatic vigor of the olive and the vine. His revolutionary preachings shone with the light of a matutinal and sacred path.

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BOOK THREE

PRISON SCENES

I

UNDER the light of the bars some eight or ten prisoners were playing cards. Chucho el Roto was dealing. This worthy was famous for his many horse-thefts, robberies of rich ranchers, hold-ups of stages, murders, defiances, cleanups, outrages, and bloody amours and jealousies. He dealt the cards slowly. He had lean hands, a gash across his cheek, and a notch in his mouth of three missing teeth. Prisoners of every kind gathered round the game. Churls and doctors, insurgents and spies laid their stakes on the same card. Nachito Veguillas formed part of the company. He had not yet joined in the game, but he kept his eye on the deck and felt for the money in his pocket. Out came a jack, and he commented enraptured:

"That's a sure bet."

He turned and smiled ingratiatingly at the caviling punter at his elbow, who remained indifferent. This was a spectre dressed in a limp drill jacket which hung on him as on a clothes-pole. Nachito again fixed his

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attention on the cards. On a sudden impulse he drew out a handful of money and threw it on the lousy blanket which in prisons takes the place of the green baize:

"There go ten *pesos* on the fool king."

Chucho el Roto warned him:

"It has repeated."

"Deal 'em out."

"Here goes."

Chucho drew out the soda card and the king of clubs appeared. Encouraged by his good luck, Nachito collected his winnings and entered wholeheartedly into the game. There was an outburst of voices from time to time, disputing some turn. Nachito was having a run of luck, and seeing him win, the sallow, caviling spectre repaid his past smile with the flaccid expression of ill-fortune. Nachito threw him a glance and unburdened his troubled heart:

"In our lamentable situation it's all the same whether you win or lose. Foso-Palmitos makes all men equal."

The other refuted this with the limp yellow look of a deflating bladder:

"While there's life, money is a very important factor. You can't get away from that!"

"What consolation can money give a man who's condemned to death?"

"At least this consolation of gambling to forget his

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troubles. Money is an indispensable factor up to the last minute."

"Are you sentenced to death, too, brother?"

"Who knows!"

"Don't they shoot them all without distinction?"

"Who knows!"

"You give me a gleam of hope. I'm going to stake fifty *pesos* on my *paroli*."

Nachito won the wager. His neighbor puckered up his flaccid visage:

"Do you always have that same run of luck?"

"I can't complain."

"What say we go partners with five *pesos*? You can stake it as you please."

"We'll play it in five bets."

"As you please."

"We'll back the jack."

"Do you like that card?"

"That's the game."

"It'll lose."

"We'll take a chance."

Chucho dealt slowly and, drawing off the soda so that all could see, he paused a moment with upraised hand. Out came the jack. Nachito gathered up his winnings and, with a stack of coins in each hand, whispered to his yellow partner:

"What did I tell you?"

"You seem to see them coming!"

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"Now it's the seven's turn."

"Why, what system are you playing?"

"Like and dislike. Last time I bet on the card I liked, so now it's got to be the seven, which doesn't strike me nor mean anything to me."

"And you call that like and dislike? That's a new one on me!"

"I've only just discovered it myself."

"This time we'll lose."

"Look, there's the seven."

"Never in the days of my life have I seen such a run of luck!"

"The third bet goes on the knight."

"Do you like it?"

"I'm grateful to it. There, we've won!"

"Let's share up."

"We're going to play the five bets."

"We'll lose."

"Or we'll win. The card I like is the five, but this time it's got to be a dislike."

"That's a funny game! Hold back half, friend."

"I'll hold back nothing. Eighty *pesos* on the *trois*."

"It won't come out."

"It's got to miss sometime."

"Take off the bet."

With one eye on the card, Chucho el Roto was calculating the difference between the two of the turn. He gave a contemptuous whistle:

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"The devil! . . . Two of a kind!"

He put the deck down on the blanket and mopped his brow with a flashy silk handkerchief. Perceiving the expectant look of the players, he began to deal with a weary air, an ugly expression showing under his scar. Out came the *trois* that Nachito was backing. The spectre at his elbow was all aflutter:

"We've won!"

Nachito rapped on the blanket with his knuckles:

"A hundred and sixty *pesos*!"

Chucho handed him the money and fixed his gaze upon him with an insolent sneer:

"With such luck as that, anybody less of a damned fool would have broken the bank. It's as if an angel whispered them in your ear!"

With good-natured assent, Nachito stacked up his winnings and began to play the buffoon:

"Quaw! Quaw!"

And a so-called Captain Viguri murmured peevishly:

"A fool's luck!"

At the same moment Nachito caught the whisper of the bilious spectre in his ear:

"Let's share up."

Nachito refused with a melancholy pucker of his mouth:

"After the fifth wager."

"It's risky."

"If we lose, it'll all be made up to us in some other

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way. They might even decide not to shoot us! If we win, it means that luck's against us in Foso-Palmitos."

"Drop the bunk, friend, and don't tempt fortune."

"We'll stake it on the jack."

"That's a bad card."

"Then we'll go smash on it. Friend dealer, a hundred and sixty *pesos* on the jack."

Chucho replied:

"Here goes!"

Nachito wore a conciliatory air:

"Thanks."

The dealer answered with a leer:

"Keep your thanks and leave me the dough."

He drew the turn and there was the jack. At this a murmur arose from the players. Nachito was pale and his hands trembled:

"I'd have preferred to lose that bet. My friend, things are beginning to look bad for us in Foso-Palmitos."

With a dying expression the spectre tried to console him:

"For the present we're raking in the money."

"That's a hundred and twenty-seven *pesos* per head."

"The cat spoiled it for us."

"It should have done worse. In our lamentable situation it's a very bad sign to win at gambling."

"Well, leave the money with Chucho."

"What good will that do?"

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"Are you going to keep on playing?"

"Till I lose. That's the only way I can calm down."

"Well, I'm going out to take the air. Thanks for your help and consider me at your orders: Bernardino Arias."

He went off. Nachito stacked up the money with trembling hands. The absurdity of the maleficent providence which in giving him such persistent good luck at gambling, had decreed his death, filled him with excruciating terror. He felt himself under the power of invisible forces, he sensed them round about him, scoffing and hostile. He grabbed a handful of money and staked it on the first card that appeared. He wanted to win and he wanted to lose. He closed his eyes only to open them immediately. Chucho el Roto turned over the deck and held it up. Nachito quite lost heart. He had won again. Sensing the treacherous gaze of the bandit fixed upon him, he apologized for his luck:

"They'll probably bump me off this very afternoon!"

II

At the end of the cell a group of prisoners was listening to the liquid, lisping narrative of a one-eyed prisoner. Squatting on his heels, he rambled on monotonously, recounting the defeat of the revolutionary forces in Curopaitito. Some five prisoners lounged on the floor listening:

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"At that time I was still in the band of Doroteo Rojas. A dog's life, never laying down your musket and wet all the while! But the worst day of all was the seventh of July. We were crossing a swamp when the Federals opened a fusillade on us. We hadn't seen them because they were firing from behind the bushes that grow around there, and if we got out of that marsh alive it was by a miracle. As soon as we got out we began blazing back at them fast and furious, and we kept on exchanging shots for a little while, and then once more tramp, tramp, tramp, along those great plains where you couldn't see the end. . . . And a sun that set the sand on fire, and there we were, tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. We made off at a dog-trot, sinking into the mire, and there were the Federals coming up behind us. And the bullets whizzing all around us. And there we were, tramp, tramp, tramp."

The Indian's liquid lisp was fixed on a single note. Doctor Atle, a young man with a pallid brow and romantic mane, a famous orator of the revolutionary faction, was sitting up in his hammock, listening to the account with extraordinary attention. From time to time he made jottings in a note-book and again fell to listening. The Indian drowsed on in his monotonous singsong:

"And tramp, tramp, tramp. The livelong day we jogged along at a trot, until at sunset we spied a burnt ranch house and we made for shelter. But it couldn't

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be done. They routed us out of there, too. We went a little further on and made for a draw-well. And there came the firing again, this time thick and fast, like a hail storm. Here dropped a bullet and there dropped another, until the earth began to boil. The Federals were anxious to finish us off and they opened a real barrage on us and pretty soon you couldn't hear anything but the popping and the popping and the popping, like when my old woman used to make popcorn. The mate nearest me kept darting and dodging from side to side, and I says to him: 'Don't start dodging 'em, pal, 'cause it's worse.' Then they gave him one in the bean and there he lay staring up at the stars. And at dawn we got to some mountains where there wasn't no water, nor corn, nor a blessed thing to eat."

The Indian fell silent. The prisoners went on smoking without commenting upon the story, quite as if they had not been listening. Doctor Atle ran over his note-book and, resting the pencil on his lips, addressed the soldier:

"What is your name?"

"Indalecio."

"Your family name?"

"Santana."

"Where do you come from?"

"I was born on the Ranch of Chamulpo. There I was born. But when I was still a boy they carried me off with a gang of peons to the Plains of Zamalpoa.

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When the revolution broke out all us peons deserted from the mines of the *Gachupín* Judas and went off with Doroteo."

Doctor Atle jotted down a few more lines in his notebook and stretched himself out in his hammock with his eyes closed and the pencil resting on his lips, which were stamped with an expression of bitterness.

III

As the day wore on, the rays of the sun, slanting through the high gratings, cut up the ward into triangles. At this time of day the vapors of sweat and tobacco were of a sticky denseness. Most of the prisoners were napping in their hammocks and, on stirring, sent off a cloud of flies, which settled down again the moment the body became inert. Others scattered about the ward in silent groups, seeking out the sunless triangles. Conversations were rare, tenuous, and tinctured with conformity to the adversities of fortune. Their spirits sensed the end of their worldly pilgrimage, and this torturing, ever-present thought invested them with a stoical serenity. The rare conversations bore a hint of a forgotten smile, the humorous glimmer of lamps that are sputtering out for lack of oil. The thought of death lent to those eyes, turned upon the world in the recollection of a past existence, an indulgent and melancholy vision. An identical destiny gave an identical aspect to the diversity of feature and

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expression. They felt themselves marooned on a distant shore, and the triangular light of the ward heightened with a modern, cubistic expression the drooping postures of the figures.

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PART SIX

SWEETS AND POISONS

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BOOK ONE

THE LESSON OF LOYOLA

I

THE melancholy Indian, who beguiles his misery with cock-fights, whispers in dives and rookeries tales of the punishments, cruelties, and magic powers of Don Santos. . . . Saint Michael's dragon revealed to him the mysteries of conjuration: he instructed him! They were cronies! They had a compact! General Banderas proclaimed himself invulnerable through a decree of Satan! Faced with this eerie power, invisible, and ever vigilant, the coppery rabble revived a theological horror, a religious fatality peopled with terrors.

II

It was the hour of guard relief at San Martín de los Mostenses, and the barber was lathering the Tyrant's face. Major del Valle stood motionless at attention in the door of the chamber. The Tyrant, with his back turned, had heard his report with no show of surprise, feigning to be already informed:

"Our Veguillas is an innocent soul. This mix-up

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isn't half bad! Major del Valle, you deserve a medal."

That insidious composure portended no good. The Major pictured the angry rumination of the General's mouth. Instinctively he exchanged a glance with the two aides drawn up in the background—two lizards in brilliant uniforms, cords, and plumes. The chamber was a large, cool cell with a floor of dusty red and with pigeons' nests in the beams. Tyrant Banderas swung round, his face covered with lather. The Major was still standing at attention in the door, his hand raised in salute. He had taken four bracers to summon courage to make his report and he felt a torturing sense of unreality. The hazy figures, fraught with dementia, had the blunted look of an hallucination. The Tyrant stared at him in silence, wagging his jaw. Then he motioned to the servant to go on shaving him. The servant, Don Cruz, was an emaciated, simian old darkey, with kinky wool now turning gray. Born in slavery, he had the moist, humble gaze of a whipped dog. He flitted giddily about the Tyrant:

"How are the razors, master?"

"All right for shaving a corpse."

"Why, they're the English ones!"

"Which means, Don Cruz, that they haven't been properly ground."

"Master, the scorching sun of these campaigns has made your flesh very tender."

The Major still stood petrified in a miltary salute.

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Don Santos, glancing into the little mirror before him, saw the door and an angle of the room reflected in crazy perspective:

"I'm sorry that Colonel de la Gándara has outlawed himself. I sincerely regret his ruin, but his hot-headedness has been his undoing. I should have been happy to pardon him, but Veguillas has put his foot in it. He's so sentimental he can't bear to see anyone in trouble. He deserves a medal, too—a pensioner's cross. Major del Valle, write out a summons for that innocent soul to appear for questioning. Why was the young student arrested?"

"His record is not clear and the open window implicates him."

He spoke in a flat tone, with a mechanical modulation remote from the moment. Tyrant Banderas wagged his jaw:

"That point is well taken in view of your later backdown before the roof. What family does the boy come from?"

"Son of the late Doctor Rosales."

"And is his sympathy with the revolutionary utopianism sufficiently demonstrated? It would be a good thing to get a report from Police Headquarters. Major del Valle, see that that matter is attended to. Lieutenant Morcillo, you take charge of circulating the necessary orders for the speedy capture of Colonel Domiciano de la Gándara. The Captain General will

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immediately order out a body of troops to make a thorough search of the entire zone. We'll have to act quickly. If we don't lay hands on the Colonel today, tomorrow he'll be in the rebel camp. Lieutenant Valvidia, go see if there's much of a caravan awaiting audience."

Having finished shaving the Tyrant, the giddy barber helped him on with his clerical frock coat. The two aides had wheeled round, executing a right-about-face with the precision of German automatons, and holding up their sabres, were marching off in opposite directions with clanking spurs.

"Chack! Chack!"

The Tyrant peered through the window panes with the sun on his cranium. There was a sound of cornets and in the ruddy yard, at the door of the monastery, an escort of dragoons wheeled their horses around an archæological landau, drawn by a team of mules, which Don Santos used for formal visits.

III

With the mincing gait of an inquisitive rat, buttoning up his clerical frock coat, Tyrant Banderas entered the audience-chamber:

"*Salutem plurimant*!"

Doña Rosita Pintado, her shawl fallen from her head, flung herself dramatically at the Tyrant's feet.

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"General, it's an injustice—what they're doing to my boy!"

The mummy's face turned vinegary:

"Arise, Doña Rosita. The audience-chamber of the first Magistrate of the Nation is not the stage of a theatre. Explain your grievance to me with decorum. What has happened to the son of the late lamented Doctor Rosales? That distinguished patrician would today be a very valuable auxilary to us in the maintenance of Order! Doña Rosita, explain to me your grievance."

"General, this morning they arrested my boy."

"Doña Rosita, explain the circumstances of that arrest."

"Major del Valle was pursuing somebody who had escaped."

"Had you given him shelter?"

"Not in the least! From what I understood, it was your pal Domiciano."

"My pal Domiciano! Doña Rosita, do you perchance refer to Colonel Domiciano de la Gándara?"

"You torture me, picking me up at every word!"

"Doña Rosita, the First Magistrate of a nation has no pals. Now how did you happen to receive the visit of Colonel de la Gándara at so unseasonable an hour?"

"It all happened in a flash, General! He dashed in from the street and went out through the window without explanations."

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"What was the reason for his selecting your house, Doña Rosita?"

"General, what is the reason for the fate that governs our lives?"

"In accordance with that doctrine, await the boy's fate, since nothing can happen to him outside that natural law. Señora Doña Rosita, I am much obliged to you for your visit. It has been a real satisfaction to me to see you again and recall the old days when the late lamented Doctor Rosales was courting you. I always remember you galloping about the ranch of Talapachi! Now console yourself with the thought that we have not the power, within the limited scope of our will, to alter the fate of the individual."

"General, don't talk to me in riddles."

"But just see now. Colonel de la Gándara, in fleeing from justice through a window, gives rise to all the incidents of this imbroglio, and there is now no possible way of our disentangling ourselves from the resulting situation. Señora Doña Rosita, you will agree with me that we go through the world very much like disobedient children who with tied hands are driven on under the lash of events. Why did Colonel Domiciano de la Gándara select your house? Doña Rosita, pardon me if I can continue the audience no longer, but accept my assurances that justice will be done. And in the last analysis, the fate of the individual will always decide the question! Good-day!"

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He moved away as stiff as a poker and with an austere gesture of his hand summoned the aide who was standing at attention in the doorway:

"There will be no more audiences today. We shall now proceed to Santa Mónica."

IV

The flaming sun flashed on the irregular stretch of roofs perched in a curve of the port. The vast equatorial ocean, caliginous with tempests and calms, stretched motionless in plains of light from the wharves to its remotest confines. The walls of redoubts and ramparts projected their rude military geometry like bulldogs reduced to a mathematical expression. A bombastic military band was entertaining the municipal populace in the kiosk of the Plaza de Armas. The metallic stridency burst like an affront upon the mute desolation of the sky, plunged in a martyrdom of light. The hordes of sheeted Indians, standing in the porticoes and along the pavements, or perched on the stairways of churches and convents, saluted the passage of the Tyrant with genuflexions. The frock-coated mummy wore a humorous expression:

"Chack! Chack! They look so meek and they're ungovernable! The scholars aren't far wrong when they say that the orignal communal organization of the indigene has had to back down before Spanish individualism, the basis of our leadership. The domi-

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nation of the Creole, the apathy of the indigene, the crapulence of the half-breed, and Colonial theocracy are the topics which Yankee industrialism and the apes of European diplomacy seize upon to revile us. It's to their interest to play into the hands of the buccaneers of the revolution in order to ruin the finances of the country and establish themselves as concessionaires of mines, railroads, and customs. . . . But we'll spoil their little game by releasing the future President of the Republic from prison with all honors."

The General's mouth, with its false teeth like keyboards, was rent with a grin. The aides assented with military rigidity. The escort of dragoons, imperative with glitter and martial sounds, surrounded the landau. The populace fell back, fearing to be run over, and the street was hushed into sudden empty stretches. At the edge of the pavement the sheeted Indian in his palm-leaf hat, unkempt and humble, saluted, crossing himself at the same time. The billiard players on the balconies of the Spanish Casino burst into enthusiastic huzzas and applause. The frock-coated mummy returned the salutations with Quakerish dignity, raising his top-hat, while the aides gave military salutes.

V

The Fortress of Santa Mónica reared its dramatic bulk on the brilliant declivity of the seashore. The reserve corps drew up in the postern. The Tyrant

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moved not a single wrinkle of his Indian mask to acknowledge the greeting of Colonel Irineo Castañón, "Peg-Leg." His face was set in hard ridges, like that of an idol carved in obsidian.

"What cell does Don Roque Cepeda occupy?"

"Number three."

"Have this illustrious patrician and his comrades been treated with the consideration which they deserve? Political opposition within legal limits deserves all the respect of the Authorities. The rigor of the law is to be applied to the insurgents in arms. Abide by these instructions in the future. We shall now pay a visit to the opposition candidate for the Presidency of the Republic. Colonel Castañón, forward march!"

The Colonel wheeled round with his hand at his visor and his wooden leg, with stiff detachment, traced a semicircle in the air. Marching off to the jingling of the key-ring, he announced with martial measure:

"Don Trinidad, you will precede us."

Don Trino went prancing ahead at a caper somewhat broken by his bunions. There was a grinding of hinges and locks. The iron grating open, he renewed his trot to the jingling measures of the key-ring. Like a tight-rope dancer, he cut mincing cross capers upon the battered finery of his patent-leather. Colonel Irineo Castañón beat time at the head of the procession: "Clack! Clack!" The limping rhythm of the wooden leg registered an echo along the vaultings and

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galleries. "Clack! Clack!" The Tyrant, foxy and clerical, pursed up his lips between his two lizard aides. The Colonel-Warden gave a bellow:

"Cell number three!"

On the threshold Tyrant Banderas saluted, removing his hat, and peered about in search of Don Roque. The whole prison world had turned to the door, paralysed with mute anxiety. When his eyes had become accustomed to the half-light of the cell, the Tyrant entered the double row of hammocks. Outdoing himself in ancient ceremoniousness, he made a deferential bow to the circle of prisoners centered about Don Roque Cepeda:

"Señor Don Roque, I have just learned of your detention in the Fortress. I deeply regret it! Do me the honor to believe that I am in no way responsible for this annoyance. Santos Banderas has the greatest consideration for so distinguished a statesman, and our differences of ideas are not so irreconcilable as you seem to suppose, Señor Don Roque. In any and all circumstances, I look upon you as a political adversary who, alive to his duties as a citizen, takes part in the assemblies and fights the battle without overstepping constitutional bounds. It is notorious that I have proceeded with the greatest rigor in the cases of those adventurers who have taken up arms and placed themselves outside the law. With such leaders, who do not hesitate to provoke a foreign intervention, I will al-

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ways be inexorable. But this is no obstacle to the respect and even satisfaction with which I regard those others who combat me protected by the rights which the law confers upon them. Don Roque, I wish to consider you as being on that plane, and I begin by telling you that I fully recognize your patriotic sentiments, that I view with approbation the generous object of your propaganda, directed toward invigorating the indigene with civic stimulants. Some day we shall have to debate this topic, but for the moment I wish only to present my excuses for this lamentable error of the police, through which this den of vice and corruption has been honored by the presence of the virtuous man, of whom our Latin Horace speaks."

Surrounded by a taciturn circle of incredulous comrades, Don Roque Cepeda beamed with the smile of a pastoral saint, which illumined his burnished wrinkles with a soft radiance:

"General, pardon my frankness, but hearing you speak I seem to be listening to the Serpent of Genesis."

The expression of his eyes and the radiance of his smile upon his wrinkles were of so ingenuous a probity as to temper with a benevolent inflection the censure of his words. The ridges of the Tyrant's green grimace became set:

"Señor Don Roque, I did not expect such courtesy from you. For my part I purposed to offer you my loyal friendship and to shake your hand. But since

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you do not think me sincere, I shall limit myself to repeating my excuses."

He raised his hat and, flanked by his two aides, walked to the door.

VI

Nachito Veguillas hopped between the double row of hammocks, sniveling and grotesque:

"Quaw! Quaw!"

The mummy wagged his jaw:

"Imbecile!"

"Quaw! Quaw!"

"Don't be a clown!"

"Quaw! Quaw!"

"Just now that horseplay fails to amuse me."

"Quaw! Quaw!"

"You'll force me to kick you out of my road."

"Quaw! Quaw!"

Obstinate, whining, his jacket gathered about his middle, Veguillas hopped about on his heels with puffed cheeks and imploring eye.

"I blush to see you! You can't make amends for your treachery by playing the frog."

"General, it's a mesmeric mixup."

Tyrant Banderas gave him a kick which sent him rolling in front of the sentinel who, hugging the door frame, presented arms.

"I'm going to make you a present of a jester's cap."

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"General, why trouble yourself?"

"You can wear it when you appear before Saint Peter. Come along, I'll give you a lift in my carriage to Mostenses. I don't want you to go off to the other world displeased with Santos Banderas. You can converse with me during the day, since we shall so soon cease to see each other. You will possibly be sentenced to death. Veguillas, why have you acted so basely toward me? Who inspired you to divulge the presidential decisions? What were your reasons for such vituperative conduct? Who are your accomplices? Do me the honor of entering my carriage and take a seat at my right. You haven't yet been tried and sentenced, and I don't want to prejudge your delinquency."

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BOOK TWO

HUMAN FRAILTIES

I

DON MARIANO ISABEL CRISTINO QUERALT Y ROCA DE TOGORES, Minister Plenipotentiary of Her Catholic Majesty in Santa Fe de Tierra Firme, Baron of Benicarlés and *Caballero Mæstrante*, decorated with more gewgaws than a gypsy's donkey, was lying in bed at midday, wearing a lace cap and a night-robe of rose-colored silk. Merlín, the lap-cur, was licking his rouge, spreading out the cosmetic and plastering his face with his lingual spatula.

II

Without being announced by the valet, Currito Mi-Alma flounced breezily into the chamber. The Andalusian youth, pausing in the doorway, sounded a drum-roll with his nails on the brim of his Cordovese hat, and with a flip clapped it on at a rakish angle, simultaneously raising his cigar to his lips with an elaborate flourish, conceited, lisping in the best tradition of the Sevillian academies:

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"My eye! Are you made up for Holy Week? Merlín has given you the very mug of a Disciplinant!"

His Excellency turned his back on the upstart:

"You are incorrigible! You've been up to something."

"Draw up a diplomatic protest. I've just got out of the jug, as we savants say."

"Stop your nonsense, Curro. I am extremely irritated."

"God's honest, Isabelita!"

"You are incorrigible! You've got into some scrape."

"Spite work! I've slept on a mat in the cooler, but that's not the worst of it: the cops have taken over my effects and all my correspondence."

The Minister of Spain sat up amongst the pillows and, catching the lap-dog by the scruff of the neck, sent it sprawling on to the carpet:

"What are you saying!"

Curro screwed up his face:

"Isabelita, put a mustard plaster on my tail!"

"What have you done with my letters?"

"I had them in a valise with seven automatic padlocks."

"I know you, Curro. You've come here with that idiotic fable to gouge money out of me!"

"Don't think it's a frame-up, Isabelita!"

"Curro, you are shameless!"

"Isabelita, thanks for the compliment, but this skit's been staged by López de Salamanca."

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"Currito, you're a swine!"

"May a bull catch me and kill me!"

"Such letters are burnt. They must be burnt! That's the only proper thing!"

"But you always keep them."

"What if the President has had a hand in this! I don't dare to think of it. This is a very difficult and complicated situation!"

"Mean to tell me it's the first one you ever got into?"

"Don't exasperate me! In the present circumstances it may cost me my career!"

"Make a stab at patching it up."

"I am not on good terms with the Government."

"Slip up on the quiet and plug 'em one below the belt. My soul, you're not a bad hand at that!"

The Representative of Her Catholic Majesty thrust his feet out of the bed and clutched his head with both hands:

"If the papers get hold of this I'll be in an impossible position! At the best it will cost me a fortune to hush it up!"

"Slip one over on Tyrant Banderas."

The Minister of Spain got up with clenched fists:

"I don't know how I keep my hands off you!"

"A very praiseworthy doubt!"

"Currito, you're a swine! This is all a slick trick of yours to squeeze money out of me. You're torturing me!"

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"Isabelita, do you see this cross? I swear by everything sacred it's true."

The Baron repeated obstinately:

"You're a swine!"

"Oh, snap out of it! I swear it by the scapulary that my mother, poor little thing, put on me when I left our beloved Spain."

Curro was moved with the sentimental pathos of an Andalusian couplet. There was an ironic glint in the blue horizons of His Excellency's egglike eyes:

"Well then, make yourself useful as lady's maid."

"Oh, you shameless thing!"

III

The Minister of Her Catholic Majesty, bedecked and perfumed, proceeded to the salon where Don Celes was awaiting him. A sensual and decadent pessimism, with literary embellishments, added a finishing touch, like another cosmetic, to the psychological picture of the diplomatic scarecrow, who in the dregs of his consciousness sublimated his amorous vices with classic laurels. In his social relations he often allowed his perverse tastes to transpire with the frank shamelessness of an *élégante* of Latium. He had always ready a suave epigram with which to flout those young incomprehensive colleagues who were devoid of fantasy and the humanities. Insinuatingly, in indiscreet confidences, he styled himself a priest of Hebe and Gany-

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mede. Swagger and deception held sway beneath this mask of frivolous worldliness, for he had ever been unable to sacrifice to Hebe. The Baron of Benicarlés pampered that false claim, flirting with the ladies in a vacuous chit chat of whispers and titters, reticences and intimacies. The ladies found that pessimism of the diplomatic cassock entrancing; charming, those discoursive, parabolic turns of phrase of the London gloves, interspersed as they were with ingenious concepts diluted in a smile of shining teeth. Those witticisms provoked much laughter among the autumnal dames: "Since we took the trouble to be born, the world might afford us more comfortable lodgings. It would be well to have less fools, to be free of toothaches, to have our bankers cancel their credits. The age of death should be one and the same for everybody, like that of military service. These are reforms that admit of no delay. In respect to modern technique the Great Architect is sadly antiquated. There are Yankee and German industrialists who would work great reforms in the order of the world if they had a seat in his Board of Administration." The Minister of Spain had a reputation for spirituality amongst the ladies, who with tender glances tempted him in vain.

IV

"My dear Celes!"

On entering the salon he masked the distress of his

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spirit, devoured with mistrust, under a thick-lipped smile. "Don Celes! The letters! The Tyrant's grimace!" A circumflex of thought rounded out the trilogy in a flash of intuition. The scarecrow recalled his amatory epistles and the painful anxiety of another distant unpleasantness at a European Court. The illustrious *Gachupín* was waiting in the drawing-room with his gloves and Panama hat resting on the bulge of his belly. Dumpy and vacuous, he emerged from the gilded penumbra with outstretched hand, but stopped short, paralyzed by the yelp of the lap-dog which, surly and finical, thrust out its flutey snout from between His Excellency's legs:

"He just won't have me for a friend."

Don Celes pressed the scarecrow's hand with an air of condolence, receiving in return an inspiriting look of benevolent indifference:

"My dear Celes, you look as if you had great news."

"My dear friend, I am very much troubled."

The Baron looked inquiringly at him with the grimace of a *figurante*:

"What has happened?"

"My dear Mariano, I am greatly mortified to have to take this step. Believe me, I am. But the critical state of the country's finances oblige me to gather in funds."

False and declamatory, the Minister of Her Catholic Majesty pressed the hands of the illustrious *Gachupín*:

"Celes, you're the very best fellow in the world! I

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can see what you are suffering, having to ask me for your money. The greatness of your heart now lies revealed to me. Have you heard the latest news from Spain?"

"Why, has there been a packet in?"

"I am referring to the cable."

"Some political change?"

"Possibilism in the Palace."

"Really? I am not surprised. I had got rumors of it, but events must have been precipitated."

"Celes, you will be Chancellor of the Exchequer. Then remember this poor exile. Allow me to embrace you!"

"My dear Mariano!"

"This is a fitting crown for your career, Celestino!"

False and confidential, he made the pompous plutocrat sit down on the sofa, and coyly thrusting out his hip, settled down beside him. The *Gachupin's* belly puffed up with satisfaction. "Emilio would cable for him. The Mother Country!" He felt a vague consciousness of new responsibilities, the adipose respectability of a personage. He experienced the strange sensation of feeling his shadow grow to prodigous proportions, while his body shrank smaller and smaller. Sonorous words rang euphoniously in his mind: "Sacerdotalism, Arbitration, Parliament, Holocaust." And he adopted a motto: "All for my Country!" That fleshy matron with her crown, sword, and shield,

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stirred him like an actress reciting verses amid the paraphernalia of footlights, wings, and drop-curtains. Don Celes felt himself invested with sacred infulæ and he vaingloriously unfurled the pomp of his cassocked destiny, as the peacock his fabulous tail. But these fatuous dreams clashed with the misgivings he felt as a business man. The illustrious *Gachupín* feared a diminution of his profits if he exchanged the exploitation of Indians and blacks for the service of the mother country: he put his hand in his breast pocket and drew out his wallet:

"My dear Mariano, in the present situation of the country, with this fluctuation and instabilty of finances, it represents a serious damage to my interests for me to settle down in Spain. You know me; you realize how it hurts me to have to press you, and so, bearing in mind my good will toward you, you will not place me in an embarrassing position! . . ."

With a faint smile, the Baron of Benicarlés tugged at Merlín's ear:

"But my dear Celestino, you are playing my rôle! Your apologies, all your words should be mine. It is not you who should speak like that. My dear Celestino, don't threaten me with that wallet; I'm more afraid of it than of a pistol! Put it back in your pocket so we can go on talking. I have a country estate for sale in Alicante. Why don't you make up your mind to buy it from me? It would make a splendid present

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for your friend, the eloquent orator. Make up your mind to buy it. I'll sell it to you cheap."

Don Celes Galindo half closed his eyes and the smile of an oracle played between the cinnamon side-whiskers.

V

The vaporings of the illustrious *Gachupín* strayed to the loftiest pinnacles. Invested with traditional conceptions, pompous and grieved, the letters of the Minister of Her Catholic Majesty to that Currito of Seville seemed to him a red and gold dishonor. "Aberrations!" Suddenly from a pit of taciturn darkness, he caught the scrutinizing grimace of Tyrant Banderas. "Aberrations!" The green mouth masticated the letters. And Don Celes, with the mental vows of a favorite son, offered up a blush of his paunchy bald pate in holocaust for the Mother Country. The impulse to provide her with a fig-leaf swept over him warm and generous, with the enthusiastic throbbing of the sanguineous wave which accompanies the toasting of national anniversaries. The plutocrat's belly was full of magnanimous resonancies. The Baron, resting on one hip on the sofa, crystallized the ambiguous honeys of a ceremonious smile. Don Celes stretched out a hand to him, condolingly, pityingly, with the gesture of Mary in the Via Crucis:

"I have seen much of the world. When you have

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seen much of the world, you come to look upon human actions with a certain philosophy. You understand me, my dear Mariano."

"Not as yet."

The Baron of Benicarlés narrowed the blue horizons of his egg-like eyes. Don Celes' whole face was transformed with a great look of profundity and secrecy:

"Yesterday the police—to my mind overstepping all bounds—effected the arrest of a Spanish subject and made a search of his luggage. . . . As I say, to my mind, overstepping all bounds."

The diplomatic scarcecrow assented with fretful squeamishness:

"I have just learned of it. Currito Mi-Alma has just come to me with the same tale of woe."

The Minister of Her Catholic Majesty smiled, and the rouge on his crass, shaven cheeks, opening up in cracks, lent to his visage the sarcastic look of a battered mask. Don Celes was stunned:

"My dear Mariano, this is a very grave matter. We must put our heads together and find some way of hushing it up."

"My dear Celestino, you are innocent. The whole thing is of no importance whatever."

With the light contraction of his facial muscles, the rouge kept opening up in new cracks. Don Celes accentuated his confidential air:

"My dear Mariano, it is my duty to warn you. Those

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letters are in the hands of General Banderas. I am perhaps divulging a political secret, but you, your friendship, our country. . . . My dear Mariano, we cannot, we must not forget our country! Those letters are in the hands of General Banderas."

"I am happy to hear it. The President will certainly know how to take care of them."

The Baron of Benicarlés assumed the sibylline air of a hierophant of cunning perversities. Don Celes was somewhat taken aback by his tone:

"My dear Mariano, I have told you that I am pronouncing no judgment upon those letters, but it is my duty to warn you."

"And I thank you. You, my illustrious friend, let yourself be carried away by your imagination. Believe me, those letters are not of the slightest importance."

"I should be happy if that were true, but I fear a scandal, my dear Mariano."

"Can this social environment be so uncultured as all that? It would be perfectly ridiculous!"

Don Celes conceded this, assuming an air of compromise:

"Undoubtedly. But the scandal must be hushed up."

The Baron of Benicarlés half closed his eyes, his whole person exuding disdain:

"A caprice! I confess I've been rather interested in that Currito. Do you know him? He's worth it!"

He spoke with so amiable a smile, with such elegant

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British indifference, that the astonished *Gachupín* hadn't the courage to come out with heroics. Everything having failed, he murmured as he toyed with his gloves:

"No, I hardly follow you, Mariano. My advice to you is to make a friend of the General."

"Do you think he is not that?"

"I think you should see him."

"That, of course, I shall not fail to do."

"Do so, Mariano, I beg you, in the name of the Mother Country. For her, for the Colony. You know its components—ignorant people without sophistication, without culture. If the cable brings any political news . . ."

"I will keep you informed and I repeat my congratulations. You are a great Plutarchian personage. Goodbye, my dear Celes."

"Go and see the President."

"I will visit him this afternoon."

"With that promise I leave you, content."

VI

Currito Mi-Alma flounced out from behind the curtains more puffed up than a figure eight:

"You were great, Isabelita!"

The Baron checked him with majestic stupefaction, shaken in his whole pudgy, hippy being:

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"This espionage seems to me hardly the proper thing!"

"See anything green in this eye?"

"I am speaking seriously."

"Oh, be your age!"

The cedars and myrtles of the garden cast a still shadow of watery greens upon the curtains of the salon, faintly stirred by a breeze scented with the fragrance of tuberoses. The garden of the Viceroy's lady was a gallant geometrical pattern of fountains and myrtles, pools and ordered paths. Motionless clauses of black mirrors marked out the fountains amid colonnades of cypress trees. With a flash of pride in his porcelain-blue eyes, the Minister of Her Catholic Majesty turned his back on the ruffian and, retiring to the shady, Colonial gallery, inserted his monocle under his eyebrow. Green creepers clambered up the walls and beyond the panes lay all the verdant shadow of the garden. The Baron of Benicarlés rested his brow against the glass. Elephantine, dandified, Anglicized, his figure was eloquent of great anxiety. Curro and Merlín, each from his corner, gazed at him, plunged in the watery light of the gallery, in its rotund curve fashioned of fragrant woods reminiscent of Oriental and Bourbonic lacquers, of a minuet danced by viceroys and fairy Princesses Almond-Blossom. Curro broke the spell, spitting smartly through his teeth:

"Isabelita darling, you can let your hair hang or do

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it up in a knot, it makes as much difference to me as the Bible of Father Carulla. Isabelita, you'll have to get a hustle on and knuckle down to Tyrant Banderas."

"You cur!"

"Isabelita, let's not start scrapping again."

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BOOK THREE

THE NOTE

I

HIS Excellency the Minister of Spain had ordered his carriage for half past six. The Baron of Benicarlés, painted, powdered, perfumed, and bemedaled, dressed with effeminate elegance, placed his Panama hat, gloves, and stick on a console. Drawing himself up in his corset with a wriggling movement, he retraced his steps and entered the bed-chamber. He drew up a leg of his trousers, taking care not to wrinkle it, and gave himself an injection of morphine. Stretching his leg with a slight limp, he returned to the console and donned his hat and gloves before the mirror. His egg-like eyes and weary mouth sketched with fluctuating signs the toboggans of his thought. As he drew on his gloves he recalled the yellow ones of Don Celes. And suddenly other images leaped to his memory with the multicolored vibration of bulls loosed in the arena. From among grammatical breaks and angles some few words strung themselves together with epigraphic vigor: "Scum of humanity! Relics of the cave! Block-

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heads!" From this springboard he turned a somersault and his thought hung gasified in subtle suspension. "Don Celes! An amusing ass! Magnificent!" His flow of thought, diluting into a vague, jocose emotion, was transmuted into successive plastic perceptions of a vigorous mental imagery and the absurd logic of a dream. Don Celes, mounted on a gaudy packsaddle, was cutting capers in a circus ring. It was actually the pompous *Gachupín*: "What conceit! Castelar had actually made him believe that when he rose to power he would send for him to become Chancellor of the Exchequer."

The Baron moved away from the console, crossed the drawing-room and the gallery, gave an order to his valet and descended the stairway. The vivid tumult of the street swept over him. The carriage was drawing up, skirting the garden. The coachman puffed out his cheeks, reining in the horses. The lackey stood at the carriage door with a rigid salute. The images had an isolated and static value, a livid, merciless relief under the fleecy sky, dominated by a green half-moon. Placing his foot on the carriage step, the Minister of Spain outlined his thoughts in clear mental words: "If some agreement is arrived at I can't stand aloof and make myself ridiculous for a few shopkeepers. It would be absurd for me to bring down upon myself the interdiction of the Diplomatic Corps. Absurd!" The carriage rolled on. The Baron mechanically

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raised his hand to his hat. Then he thought: "Someone bowed to me. Who was it?" In an angular, oblique contortion he saw the street, tumultuous with lights and music. Spanish flags adorned the grocery stores and pawnshops. In another contortion he recalled an uncouth, bibulous feast at the Spanish Casino. Then through rapid toboggans of darkness he plunged into a backwater of consciousness, where he savored the refined and tedious sense of his isolation. In that abysm a series of broken, isolated phrases sketched out once more the polyhedrons of his thought; the acrobatic clauses returned, linked together by hidden bonds: "Let them send me to the heart of Africa. Where there's no Spanish Colony. . . . The great Don Celes! A grotesque individual! . . . What an idea of Castelar's! . . . I didn't act very human. I'm almost sorry. A stupid jest . . . But he didn't forget to bring along the I.O.U.'s. I did right to cut him short. An opportune parry. And I must owe him a good deal. . . . It's worrisome. It's humiliating. Diplomatic emoluments are insignificant. The budget, too, insignificant."

II

The carriage tottered into Rinconada de Madres. There was a cock-fight. The spectacle was projected on a tense silence, broken by gusts of popular huzzas. The Baron raised his monocle and glanced at the

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rabble, then let it fall. With a literary perspective he recalled through a union of contrasts his life at European Courts. He was caressed by a zephyr scented with orange-blossoms. The carriage was skirting the walls of a convent orchard. The sky had a green light, like some skies of Veronese; the moon, as everywhere, a halo of French, English, and Italian verses. And the diplomatic scarecrow overlaid the subtle, pessimistic reminiscence of his nostalgia with vague, confused, and ambiguous thoughts: "Explanations! Why, indeed? Blockheads!" By successive derivations, in a theory of images, in terms charged with significance like cabalistic words, he envisaged the dream of a journey through exotic lands. He drew up at his collection of ivories. "That paunchy, grinning idol, that's laughing with its bare belly, resembles Don Celes." Again the polyhedrons of his thought were sketched out in words: "I shall be sorry to leave the country. I shall carry away many memories. Some very charming friendships. It has given me both gall and honey. Life's the same everywhere. . . . The men are superior to the women. It's the same as in Lisbon. Amongst the young men there are some real Apollos. . . . Perhaps the nostalgia of these tropic climes will haunt me forever. They have an aroma of the nude." The carriage rolled on. Portalitos de Jesús, Plaza de Armas, Monotombo, Rinconada de Madres vibrated in a

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luminous dazzlement of saddlery, bowie-knives, gaming-tables, strings of glass beads, and silver filigrees.

III

In front of the English Legation there was a rout of be-dirked Indians. The carriage drew up at the curb-stone. The coachman puffed out his cheeks, reining in the horses. The lackey stood at the carriage door with a rigid salute. On descending the Baron vaguely discerned a woman in a shawl. She opened the black tongs of her arms—perhaps she was calling him. The image was blotted out. Perhaps the old woman was fighting her way to the carriage. Pausing a moment on the carriage step, the Baron surveyed the revelry in the Rinconada. He entered the Legation. For a moment he thought someone was calling him; undoubtedly someone *was* calling him. But he couldn't turn round: two Ministers, two oracles of the service, stopped him with a bow, simultaneously raising their hats. They were standing on the first step of the stairway under the glittering chandelier before a mirror which reflected their figures in an oblique, crazy geometry. The Baron of Benicarlés returned their bow, absent-mindedly removing his hat, his thoughts afar. The image of the old woman, with her arms like tongs under her shawl, rose before him. There was wafted to him, whelmed in memories, the sound of his own name—the voice that was perhaps calling to him. He

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smiled mechanically at the two figures that stood waiting under the resplendent chandelier. Exchanging courtesies and affable phrases, he mounted the stairway, flanked by the Ministers of Chile and Brazil. Rolling his r's in a fugue of elegant and amiable nasals, he observed:

"I believe we're the first."

He glanced down at his feet with a vague fear of finding a trouser-leg caught up. He felt the tingle of the morphine. A garter was coming loose! Horrors! And the Brazilian Minister was wearing Don Celes' yellow gloves!

IV

The dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Sir John Scott, Minister of Her Britannic Majesty, was expounding his puritanical scruples in a wilted French with orchestrations of aspirated h's. He was small and rotund with a jovial paunch and the great bald pate of a patriarch. His face beamed with an ingenuous crimson, and a glint of shrewd distrust shone in his blue eyes, still matutinal with youth and play:

"England has manifested in various ways the displeasure with which she views this noncompliance with the most elementary rules of warfare. England cannot look with indifference upon the execution of prisoners, carried out in violation of all standards and agreements between civilized nations."

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Latin-American diplomacy concerted a murmur of approbation, peopling the silence every time the Honorable Sir John Scott moistened his lips in his whisky and soda. The Minister of Spain, absorbed in a sentimental flirtation, had his gaze fixed upon the Minister of Ecuador, Doctor Aníbal Roncali, a Creole supercharged with electricity, with black curls, ardent eyes, genteel person, and the certain fine, dark emotional quality of a shadow pantomime. The German Minister Von Strugg was exchanging some interminable Saxon words in a low tone with Count Chrispi, Minister of Austria. The French Representative cocked his head in a false attitude of attention, half of his face reflected in his monocle. Sir John moistened his lips and went on speaking:

"A Christian sentiment of human solidarity holds up to us all the same chalice, that we may commune in a joint action and entreat the observance of international legislation regarding the lives of prisoners and their exchange. The Government of the Republic will surely not fail to heed the suggestions of the Diplomatic Corps. The English Minister has mapped out his course of conduct, but at the same time he is specially interested in learning the point of view of the Diplomatic Corps. This, sirs, is the object of our meeting. I present my excuses to you, but as dean of the Diplomatic Corps, I have felt it my duty to summon you to this conference."

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Latin-American diplomacy gave a soft, prolonged murmur of laudatory hisses, congratulating the Representative of Her Gracious Britannic Majesty. The Brazilian Minister, a rotund figure, with the Asiatic expression of a mandarin or bonze, took the floor, harmonizing his views with those of the Honorable Sir John Scott, and gesticulating with his rolled-up gloves. The Baron of Benicarlés felt an intense irritation. The flitting yellow gloves interrupted his flirtation. He left his seat and approached the Ecuadorian Minister:

"Our Brazilian colleague is wearing some terrible canary gloves."

The First Secretary of the French Legation, who was acting as minister, explained:

"They're cream-colored: the last word at the Court of Saint James."

The Baron of Benicarlés thought of Don Celes with a certain ironical surprise. The Minister of Ecuador had risen and was speaking verbosely, shaking his ebon curls. The Baron of Benicarlés, a great respecter of form, wore a smile of suffering and sympathy, observing those gesticulations and listening to the torrent of metaphor. Doctor Aníbal Roncali was proposing that the Spanish-American diplomats should first hold a meeting under the chairmanship of the Minister of Spain: the little eaglets that were spreading their wings for the heroic flight, grouped round about the mother

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eagle. Latin-American diplomacy murmured its conformity. The Baron of Benicarlés bowed. He thanked them for the honor in the name of the Mother Country. Then, pressing the Ecuadorian's dark hand between his own hands, like those of an odalisque, with head tilted to one side, the sugary smile of a nun, and an artful, melting gaze, he explained mincingly:

"My dear colleague, I accept only on the condition that you come with me as secretary."

Doctor Aníbal Roncali felt a lively desire to free the hand which the Spanish Minister persistently retained within his own. He was seized with a childish, panicky repugnance. He recalled the painted hag that had called to him from a street-corner when he was on his way to the Lyceum. That terrible old hag, insistent as a grammatical theme! And the scarecrow holding his hand—he seemed about to thrust it into his breast! He was speaking hyperbolically, his eyes brimming with ecstasy, disquietingly shameless. The Minister of Ecuador made an effort and freed himself:

"One moment, Your Excellency. I must speak to Sir John."

The Baron of Benicarlés pulled himself together and adjusted his monocle:

"You owe me an answer, my dear colleague."

Doctor Aníbal Roncali shook his curls in assent and walked off with a strange sensation down his back, as if he were still pursued by the hissing call of the painted

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hag which he had heard on his way to the lecture hall of the Lyceum. He joined the group amid which the evangelical English Plenipotentiary was receiving congratulations. The Baron, drawing himself up in his stays and swaying his hips, approached the American Ambassador. And the flux of extravagant gesture toward the nucleus that was offering up incense to British diplomacy attracted the formidable Von Strugg, Representative of Germany: satellite of his orbit, the saffron Count Chrispi, Minister of Austria-Hungary. The American spoke in a confidential tone:

"The Honorable Sir John Scott has eloquently expressed the humanitarian sentiments of the Diplomatic Corps. Undoubtedly. But can that justify our intervening in the domestic questions of the Republic, even to the extent of offering counsel? It is undeniable that the Republic is undergoing a serious revolutionary upheaval and the repression must be proportionate. We witness the executions, we hear the volleys, we cover our ears, we close our eyes, and we speak of counselling. . . . Sirs, we are too sentimental. The Government presided over by General Banderas, responsible and with sufficient bases for judgment, perhaps considers rigorous measures necessary. In such circumstances, how can the Diplomatic Corps offer counsel?"

The German Minister, a Semite enriched in the rubber regions of Bolivia, expressed his agreement with polyglot impertinence, in Spanish, English, and Ger-

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man. Count Chrispi, bald and stern, assented, too, spraying his saffron moustache with a flow of pure French. The Representative of Her Catholic Majesty wavered. The three diplomats—the American, the German, and the Austrian—in triple agreement, put him on the scent of an intrigue, and he felt sincerely grieved to realize how in that world, his world, all cabals were formed without taking into account the Minister of Spain. The Honorable Sir John Scott had again taken the floor:

"Permit me to request my kind colleagues please to resume their places."

The discreet conventicles broke up. Resuming their seats, the Ministers, leaning over and whispering to each other, produced a muffled, Babelic murmur. With the scrupulous phraseology of a Puritan conscience, Sir John again held up to the Diplomatic Corps the chalice brimming with humanitarian sentiments. After prolonged discussion a note was drawn up. It was signed by twenty-seven nations. It was a transcendental act. The event, cast in the epigraphic and laconic wording of the cable, went rolling on its way through all the great dailies of the world: "Sante Fe de Tierra Firme. The Diplomatic Corps has decided upon the presentation of a note to the Government of the Republic. The note, to which great importance is attached, counsels the closing of saloons and demands the strengthening of guards at foreign banks and legations."

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PART SEVEN

THE GREEN GRIMACE

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BOOK ONE

THE TYRANT'S RECREATIONS

I

GENERAL BANDERAS threw the disk into the mouth of the frog. Doña Lupita, bedizened with rings and beads, presided over the game under a striped parasol, between the portable coffee-furnace and the *metate*, in the circle of a wheel of colors.

"Score one!"

II

"Quaw! Quaw!"

Through a malignant caprice of the Tyrant's, Nachito, clownish and fawning, formed part of the company of cronies. The green grimace was ruminating the poisons of a gibe, still unformed and but newly spawned in the depths of his spirit. He sketched in the first outlines of a hypochondriacal sarcasm:

"Veguillas, you'll be my partner in the next throw. Try to live up to your reputation and don't make a mess of things. Why, you're trembling like a leaf! What a weakling you have become! A glass of lemon-

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ade will pick you up. Veguillas, if you don't pull yourself together you'll forfeit your reputation. Don't go losing your nerve. A lemonade is very good for such states of panic. Just give your order to the old girl of the canteen and offer a toast to the company. Say good-bye like a hero and we'll all pray for you when you have kicked off."

Nachito rocked himself to and fro on his bow-legs, his face red and puffy with tears:

"The mundane sylph has been my ruin."

"Don't digress."

"General, an uncanny trick of the spirits is the cause of all my trouble. I appeal to you to put an end to my martyrdom! Give me a ray of hope! Just one ray of hope! On the bleakest dune blooms the rose of hope. Man cannot live without hope. The bird has hope and sings even though the branch creaks beneath it, for it knows it can depend upon its wings. The gleam of dawn has hope. General, every living thing is arrayed in the green mantle of the Deity! His voice sings in every being! The flash of His gaze pierces the depths of prisons! He consoles the condemned in the death cell! He holds out to him the promise of his sentence being commuted by the Public Authorities."

Don Santos extracted his ministerial handkerchief from his frock coat and wiped his cranium:

"Chack! Chack! You have made a very eloquent synthesis! Doctor Sánchez Ocaña has undoubtedly

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been giving you lessons in Santa Mónica. Chack! Chack!"

The circle of cronies burst into laughter at this malignant thrust of the Tyrant's.

III

Doña Lupita, wizened and obsequious, lined up the rainbow drinks in a ray of sunlight. Don Santos alternately moistened his lips in the lemonade and scrutinized the weasel: strings of corals, slavish honeys, oriental smiles.

"Chack! Chack! Doña Lupita, I'm observing that you've got the very nose of Cleopatra. All because of a few smashed glasses you've caused a real upheaval in the Republic. You make more trouble than the Honorable Diplomatic Corps. How many glasses did Colonel de la Gándara smash for you? Doña Lupita, for less than a *peso* you've driven him into the ranks of the insurgents. The nose of the Pharaoh Queen could do no more. Doña Lupita, the debt of justice which you wished me to liquidate has turned out to be a concatenation of fatal circumstances. It is the primary cause of Colonel de la Gándara's rebellion. It has landed the son of Doña Rosa Pintado in Santa Mónica. Cucarachita la Taracena is clamoring against the closing down of her brothel. And now we have a note pending from the Minister of Her Catholic Majesty. There may be a rupture of relations with the

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Mother Country! And you, old girl, there you are completely undisturbed by so many catastrophes! And last but not least, a few smashed glasses worth no more than a paper *peso*, a mere nothing, oblige me to forego the batrachian concerts of Señor Veguillas."

"Quaw! Quaw!"

To get into the good graces of the Tyrant, Nachito was outdoing himself in his imitation of the croakings and leapings of the frog. The Tyrant apostrophized him with Quakerish acerbity:

"Don't go playing the buffoon, Veguillas. These good friends who are going to try you will not allow themselves to be influenced by your horse-play. They are all cultivated men, the least of whom has witnessed the parliamentary procedures of Old Europe."

"Juvenal and Quevedo!"

The illustrious *Gachupín* caressed his cinnamon side-whiskers, his belly rotund, his dewlap inflated with obsequiousness. The old canteen wench crossed herself:

"Virgin Mary, this is the work of old Nick himself!"

"Well, he made a good job of it!"

"If everything turned out so complicated in this world, not even a saint could keep out of hell."

"Well said, Doña Lupita. But doesn't your soul quake over having stirred up such a tumult of clashes and actions?"

"Master, don't frighten me!"

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"Doña Lupita, do you not tremble over the problem of our eternal responsibilities?"

"I'm praying to myself!"

IV

Tyrant Banderas trained his gaze upon the roadway:

"Chack! Chack! Whichever one of you has got the best eye-sight, kindly look and inform me what troop is that coming. That gallant horseman who's riding ahead, isn't that our worthy Don Roque Cepeda?"

Don Roque, with an escort of four Indian equerries reined his horse in the roadway outside the palisade. His sun-tanned brow, the golden sombrero in his hand, the mount with its silver-trimmed trappings, lent to the horseman's figure in the sunset glow the majesty of a Romanesque saint. With Quakerish dignity, Tyrant Banderas went through the farce of welcoming him:

"Very happy to see you here! It was Santos Banderas who was under the obligation of interviewing you. My dear Don Roque, why have you taken this trouble? It was the duty of your humble servant to visit you at your residence with all the officials of the Government and present his excuses to you. It was with that intention that I sent one of my aides to your house requesting an audience. And here you very courteously go and take all this trouble upon yourself, when it was all the obligation of Santos Banderas!"

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Don Roque dismounted. The Tyrant threw open his arms in a gesture of friendly greeting. They held a long confidential conversation on the observation bench of the friars, facing the becalmed equatorial ocean, with lanes of sunlight streaking the vast conflagration of the west.

"Chack! Chack! Very happy to see you!"

"Mr. President, I didn't want to leave for the campaign without paying you a visit—an act of courtesy which is further prompted by my love for the Republic. I received the visit of your aide, Mr. President, and more recently that of my old comrade, Lauro Méndez, Secretary of Foreign Relations. I have proceeded in consequence of our talk, of which I suppose you, Mr. President, to be informed."

"The Secretary has done wrong if he has failed to inform you that he was acting upon my instructions. I like frankness. My friend Don Roque, our national independence is undergoing a period of danger, assailed as it is by foreign cupidity. The Honorable Diplomatic Corps—a thieves' den of Colonial interests —is attacking us on the flank with tricky notes, which the cable spreads abroad. Diplomacy has its agencies of defamation and they are now employing them against the Republic of Santa Fe. Our rubber, our mines, and our oil wells have awakened the cupidity of the Yankee and the European. I foresee hours of supreme anguish for all patriotic spirits. We may be

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exposed to an armed intervention. It was with the object of proposing a truce that I asked you to grant me this interview. Chack! Chack!"

Don Roque echoed:

"A truce?"

"A truce till such time as the international conflict shall have been resolved. Name your conditions. I begin by offering you a general amnesty for all political prisoners who have not taken up arms."

Don Roque murmured:

"The amnesty is an act of justice which I most heartily applaud. But how many have been unjustly accused of conspiring!"

"They will all come under the terms of the amnesty."

"But will the electoral propaganda be really free and untrammeled? Will it not be hampered by the political agents of the Government?"

"It will be unrestrained and safeguarded by the law. Can I say more? I wish to see the country restored to peace, and I offer you a means to that end. Santos Banderas has none of the vulgar ambitions which dissident circles attribute to him. All I desire is the well-being of the Republic. It will be the happiest day of my life when I can return obscurely to my strip of land, like Cincinnatus. In a word, you and your friends recover your liberty, the full exercise of your civil rights. But you, as a loyal man and a patriotic citizen, will bend your efforts toward guiding the

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revolution into legal channels. If then the people support you in the struggle by giving you their votes, I shall be the first to bow to the sovereign will of the nation. Don Roque, I admire your humanitarian ideals and I bitterly regret my inability to share your comforting optimism. That is the tragedy of my position! You, a Creole of distinguished lineage, reject what the Creole represents. I, on the other hand, a pure-blooded Indian, am no believer in the virtues and capacities of my race. You seem to me a visionary. Your faith in the destiny of the indigene reminds me of Father Las Casas. You wish to dissipate the shadows that three hundred years of Colonial rule have cast upon the soul of the Indian. A laudable design! That you may achieve it is the sincerest wish of Santos Banderas. Don Roque, when the present circumstances have disappeared, you may defeat me, annihilate me, demonstrate to me by your victory—which I shall be the first to applaud—all the latent potentialities of my race. Your victory, apart from my circumstantial defeat, would mean the victory of the permanent centering of the Indian in the future destiny of our country. Don Roque, intensify your propaganda, achieve the miracle, and believe me, I shall be the first to applaud it. Don Roque, I am grateful to you for having heard me through, and I beg you to state your objections with all frankness. I don't want you to bind yourself now

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with a promise which later you may be unable to keep. Talk it over with the outstanding individuals of your faction and offer them the olive branch in the name of Santos Banderas."

Don Roque gazed at him with so ingenuous an expression of placidity and probity as to reveal his distrust.

"A truce!"

"A truce. The sacred union. Don Roque, let us preserve the independence of our country."

Tyrant Banderas opened his arms in a gesture of pathos. Snatches of his cronies' chaffing banter were wafted to him from the crepuscular depths of the yard, where they were amusing themselves with taunts and gibes at the expense of Nachito Veguillas.

V

Don Roque trotted along the road, waving his handkerchief from afar. Don Santos leaned over the palisade and waved back with his silk hat. Horse and rider were now hidden by the high cornfields and still the arm could be descried fluttering the white salute of a handkerchief.

"Chack! Chack! A perfect lamb!"

The mummy humorously expanded his green grimace and glanced at the old canteen wench who, seated between the little coffee-furnace and the *metate*, under

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the colored rings of the parasol, was saying her rosary, apprehensive, trembling with the awe of a sacred night. She got up at a signal from the Tyrant:

"General, the mix-ups of this life could send the saintliest person into hell's cauldrons."

"Old girl, you'll have to amputate that Cleopatra nose."

"If that would fix up the world, noseless I'd be this very night."

"The smashing of a few glasses at your stand has stirred up the devil's own row. Just look at our harmony-loving friend here, in disgrace and accused of treason! He will perhaps be sentenced to death!"

"And who's to blame for my beak?"

"That's a question which future historians shall have to elucidate. Veguillas, say good-bye to our old canteen wench and grant her your pardon. Show your spirit of generosity. Don the chlamys and astonish our friends here, who take you for a donkey, with a magnanimous gesture."

"Juvenal and Quevedo!"

The mummy looked at the *Gachupín* with sour sarcasm:

"My illustrious Don Celestino, you'll have people poking fun at me. Neither Juvenal nor Quevedo: Santos Banderas, a figure in the Southern Continent! Chack! Chack!"

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BOOK TWO

THE CLUB TERRACE

I

DOCTOR CARLOS ESPARZA, Minister of Uruguay, listened with a bantering, sophisticated air to the confidences of his dear colleague, Doctor Aníbal Roncali, Minister of Ecuador. They were dining in the Círculo de Armas:

"The Baron of Benicarlés has placed me in a disagreeable position. I ask you if I haven't given too brilliant evidence of my masculinity to have to be afraid of gossip. But the conduct of the Spanish Minister is annoying nevertheless. What smiles! What glances, my friend!"

"Ha! A real passion!"

Doctor Esparza, bald, myopic, elegant, adjusted his tortoise-rimmed monocle. Doctor Aníbal Roncali looked at him with a mixture of amusement and vexation:

"You seem to be feeling frisky."

The Minister of Uruguay apologized with an elaborate air of innocence:

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"Aníbal, I see you're about to fall into the clutches of the Baron of Benicarlés. And that might give rise to a diplomatic conflict and even to a reclamation by the Mother Country."

The Minister of Ecuador made a gesture of annoyance, accentuated by a toss of his curls:

"That's right, keep on!"

"What do you think of doing?"

"I don't know what to do."

"I suppose you'll decline the post of secretary which would allow you to collaborate in the great project that you so eloquently expounded this evening?"

"Of course."

"All through squeamishness."

"Don't jest about it."

"I'm not jesting. I repeat that you have no valid justification for frustrating an entente which holds out such fair promise. 'The eagle and the eaglets spreading their youthful wings for the heroic flight.' You were very eloquent! You are a great lyrist!"

"Don't go pulling my leg, Doctor."

" 'Lyrical, sentimental, susceptible, sensitive!', as the Nicaraguan Swan * exclaimed. That's why you can't disassociate your diplomatic duties from the flirtation of the Spanish Minister."

"Let's be serious, Doctor. What do you think of Sir John's proposal?"

* The poet, Rubén Darío.

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"It's a first step."

"What ulterior consequences would you assign to the note?"

"Well, who knows? The note may be the precursor of other notes. . . . It depends upon the attitude that the President adopts. Sir John, so cordial, so evangelical, is only aiming at an indemnification of twenty millions for the West Company, Limited. Once more the flowery nosegay of humanitarian sentiments conceals an asp."

"The note is undoubtedly a feeler. But what attitude do you think the President will adopt? Will the Government agree to pay them the indemnification?"

"Unfortunately our America is still a colony of Europe . . . But perhaps this time the Government of Santa Fe will not allow themselves to be coerced. They know that the revolutionary program conflicts with the monopolies of these companies. Tyrant Banderas will not die of a diplomatic goring. The self-interest of the Creole, master of the land, and foreign finance are united in his support. When the time comes, the Government could refuse to pay the indemnifications, secure in the knowledge that revolutionary radicalism can never for a moment win the support of the Chancelleries. It is true we must look upon the emancipation of the Indian as an inevitable event. It would be foolish to close our eyes to that reality. But to recognize the inevitabilty of an event does not make it im-

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minent. Death is inevitable, yet all our life is spent in an effort to postpone it. The Diplomatic Corps acts quite reasonably in defending the existence of the old political organizations now in decline. We are the prop of those chronic valetudinarians. Valetudinarians who, like the ancient moralists, are slow in dying."

The breeze stirred the hangings, and the blue drop-curtain of the ocean showed in a distance of deep shadow, illumined with opaline beacons and mast-lights.

II

The Ministers of Ecuador and Uruguay strolled on to the terrace, smoking their cigars. The Minister of Japan, Tu-Lag-Thi, catching sight of them, sat up in his bamboo rocking-chair with the false, affable bow of oriental diplomacy. He was sipping his coffee, and his gold-rimmed spectacles were trained upon an English newspaper. The Latin-American diplomats approached him: salaams, smiles, artificial ceremoniousness, the bows of a quadrille, hand-clasps and French chit chat. The servant, a dapper mulatto, alert to the movements of the diplomats, drew up two rocking-chairs. Shaking his curls, Doctor Roncali launched forth upon an oratorical rhapsody, singing the beauty of the night, the ocean and the moon. Tu-Lag-Thi, Minister of Japan, listened with his obscure, tight grimace, his purplish lips stretched taut across his white teeth, his eyes oblique, suspicious and malignant.

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Doctor Esparza threw out a feeler, hungering for exotic thrills:

"In Japan the nights must be admirable."

"Oh! . . . Certainly! And this night is not lacking in Japanese *cachet.*"

Tu-Lag-Thi had a thin voice like a rickety piano, the rigid mobility of a mechanical doll, the angular gestures of a spring mechanism, the inner life of a wire spiral. He smiled with his artificial and obscure grimace:

"My dear colleagues, until now I've had no opportunity of learning your opinion. What do you think of the note?"

"It's a first step."

Doctor Esparza subtilized his words with an ambiguous smile of eloquent reserve. The Minister of Japan continued:

"We have all thought the same. Undoubtedly. A first step. But what will be the successive steps? Will not this agreement of the Diplomatic Corps be broken? Where are we tending? The English Minister is acting under the urge of his humanitarian sentiments, but this generous impulse may be dissipated. All of the foreign colonies without exception represent interests which are but little in sympathy with the revolutionary program. The Spanish Colony, so numerous, so influential, so identified with the Creole in their activities, in their sentiments, in their viewpoint toward social

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problems, is frankly hostile to the agrarian reform set forth in the Zamalpoa Plan. At this very moment—this is the information I have received—they are planning a movement which shall synthesize and affirm their identification with the Government of the Republic. May it not happen that the Honorable Sir John Scott shall find himself unsupported in his humanitarian endeavors?"

Doctor Carlos Esparza blinked his eyes with a sapient and shrewd myopia:

"My dear colleague, you will agree with me that diplomatic relations cannot always be guided by the clear norms of the Gospel."

Tu-Lag-Thi replied with piteous mews:

"Japan subordinates the interests of her subjects settled in this country to the principles of international law. But, confidentially speaking, and even, perhaps, indiscreetly, I cannot conceal my skepticism regarding the moral support which the laudable sentiments of the English Minister may receive from some of our colleagues. As a man of honor I cannot credit the subtleties and insinuations of certain dailies too partial to the Government of the Republic. The West Company! Aberrations!"

This truculent final word dropped from the thick-lipped, Asiatic smile of Tu-Lag-Thi, transformed in a rending of l's and r's. Doctor Aníbal Roncali stroked his moustache, and in a tremulous murmur retouched

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a sentimental phrase. He launched forth with the nervous tic which shook his black curls, erect, like lizards' tails:

"General Banderas cannot order the closing down of saloons. If he were to do so, it would provoke a popular uprising. These holidays are the Bacchanalia of the Indian and the half-breed."

III

There could be heard sounds of revelry. The strings of lanterns danced in a row along the street. At the end whirled a merry-go-round. Its luminous shriek, hysterical and strident, hypnotized the cats on the fringe of the eaves. The street gave sudden blinks in concert with the swishing and the acrobatic exercises of the wind on the strings of lanterns. In the distance, against a mist of stars, was etched the dark, architectural outline of San Martín de los Mostenses.

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BOOK THREE

ENTER BUFFOONS

I

TYRANT BANDERAS in the window trained his telescope upon the city of Santa Fe:

"How pretty the illuminations are! Really lovely, my friends!"

The group of cronies surrounded the telescope and the astronomical ladder on whose pinnacle perched the green grimace:

"You can't deny the people bread and pleasure. The illuminations are really lovely, lovely!"

The sea-breeze wafted from Santa Mónica the far-off detonation of a fusillade:

"The masses are all right when they're kept free of dangerous propaganda. And strict rule is very salutary!"

The group of cronies stood in a circle with their attention fixed upon the Tyrant.

II

Tyrant Banderas descended from his pinnacle and joining the company of his comrades and supporters, took Veguillas by the ear:

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"Now we'll hear your batrachian concert for the last time. How's your gullet? Would you like some kind of a gargle to clear up your voice?"

Gross, timorous, and obliging, the company rewarded this thrust with a guffaw. Nachito looked dazed:

"What clarity of note can you demand from a near-corpse?"

"You do very wrong to refuse to propitiate your judges with a little music. Gentlemen, this bosom friend stands here before you accused of treason. If his complicity hadn't been discovered, he might have been the finish of all of you. You will remember that last evening, speaking in confidence among friends, I announced to you the just decision which I had taken regarding the subversive activities of Colonel Domiciano de la Gándara. Those words, pronounced by Santos Banderas in the strictest confidence, have been divulged abroad. You will now advise me regarding the penalty which should be inflicted upon the divulger of my secrets. The witnesses for the defense have been summoned and, if you will allow me, I shall have them appear before you and give their testimony. The culprit maintains that a public woman divined his thoughts while in a trance. Prior to this the woman had been subjected to the hypnotic passes of a certain Polish professor. Here we have a thriller by Alexander Dumas! This professor who hypnotizes the inmates of brothels and unfolds their prophetic vision is an un-

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lucky descendant of Joseph Balsamo. Do you remember the novel? A very interesting story. We are living it! Now here you see our Veguillas, an emulator of the brilliant mulatto! He will now tell us where he was making off to in company with the rebel, Colonel Domiciano de la Gándara."

Nachito hiccoughed:

"Well, we had just come out of a certain house and were chatting together."

"Both drunk?"

"General, during these fairs all Santa Fe is one big carouse. Well then, as we were going along chatting, that nut suddenly gives a leap and skips into a doorway. Someone in a nightshirt had just that moment opened it. And in the excitement, I, like a damned fool, dove in behind."

"Could you enlighten us as to the establishment to which you two had repaired for this carouse?"

"General, don't make me blush. It's not a proper place to be mentioned in this audience-chamber. In your noble, patrician presence I blush with shame."

"Answer the question. What dive were you at with Colonel de la Gándara, and what secrets passed between you in the place in question? Veguillas, you knew of the order for his arrest and by some word you dropped in your state of drunkenness you put the fugitive on his guard."

"Are my many years of loyalty no guarantee?"

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"You may have done it unwittingly, but a state of alcoholism cannot be alleged as an extenuating circumstance in the tribunal of Santos Banderas. You are a drunkard and you spend your nights carousing in brothels. You may as well know that Santos Banderas is aware of your every movement. I warn you that only by telling the truth can you mollify me. Veguillas, I want to stretch out a hand to you and drag you out of the mire in which you are floundering, for the crime of treason carries a very heavy punishment in our penal code."

"Mr. President, there are happenings in this life that strike terror to your heart and set you to thinking—happenings that are completely novelesque. On the night in question I was visiting a jade who can read your thoughts."

"And with such extraordinary capacities this jade is living in a brothel and being courted by you?"

"Well, that's what happened last night at Cucarachita's. I want to make a full statement and unburden my conscience. The two of us were sinning. Yesterday was All-hallowe'en, General! I swear to you on my honor, friends, that hussy had a holy candle keeping watch upon the mysteries. She was mind-reading!"

"Veguillas, these are alcoholic chimeras, because you were dead drunk last night when you entered that woman's room. You have played the traitor, divulging my secrets in execrable commerce with a prostitute. As

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a first measure, to temper that ardent flesh of yours, the best thing would be the *cepo*.* Retire to a corner, kneel down, and try to elevate your thoughts to the Supreme Being. These good friends are going to sit in judgment upon you and the result of their deliberations may be the death penalty. Veguillas, the witnesses which you have cited in your defense are going to appear before us, and if their testimony turns out to be favorable to you, I shall be heartily pleased. Colonel López de Salamanca, proceed immediately to have the prostitute and the Polish Professor appear and give their testimony."

III

Colonel López de Salamanca halted in the doorway and introduced the Polish Professor into the room. Behind him appeared Lupita, walking on tip-toe. The Polish Professor, tall and bewhiskered, with a broad brow and a scholar's mane, was wearing a dress coat with two ribbons crossed on his breast and a rosette in his lapel. Holding his silk hat under his arm, he saluted with a pompous, theatrical bow:

"I present my respects to the Supreme Dignitary of the Republic. Michaelis Lugin, doctor of the Univer-

* An old form of military punishment, which consisted in tying the culprit in a seated position, with the knees thrust between the arms and a musket placed on the arms between these and the legs.

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sity of Cairo, initiated in the Secret Sciences of the Brahmans of Bengal."

"Do you profess the doctrines of Allan Kardec?"

"I am but a humble disciple of Mesmer. The spiritualism of Allan Kardec is nothing but a childish corruption of ancient necromancy. Evocations of the dead are found in Egyptian papyri and in Chaldean tiles. The term by which these phenomena are designated is formed of two Greek words."

"This Professor expresses himself most doctorally! Are you raking in money under the name of 'The Prophet of Cairo'?"

"Mr. President, my merit, if indeed I possess any, does not consist in raking in money and piling up riches. I have been entrusted with the mission of diffusing Theosophic doctrines and preparing the masses for an approaching age of miracles. The New Christ now casts his shadow upon the paths of the Planet."

"Do you admit having put this girl in a trance by means of hypnotic passes?"

"I admit having made a few experiments with her. She is a very remarkable subject."

"Describe in detail each experiment."

"Mr. President, if you so desire, you may see the program of my demonstrations in the theatres and academic centers of St. Petersburg, Vienna, Naples, Berlin, Paris, London, Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro. My theories

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of Karma and biomagnetic suggestion have recently been discussed in the great journals of Chicago and Philadelphia. The Society of the Theosophic Star of Havana has recently conferred upon me the title of the Perfect Brother. The Empress of Austria frequently does me the honor of consulting me regarding the interpretation of her dreams. I am the possessor of secrets which I shall never reveal. The President of France and the King of Prussia attempted to suborn me at the time of my professional appearances in those countries. Quite uselessly! The Theosophic Path instills in us a contempt for riches and honors. If you authorize me to do so, I shall place my albums of photographs and clippings at your disposal, Mr. President."

"How is it that with your mastery of such austere doctrines and holding so high a degree in Theosophy, you go barnstorming around brothels? Kindly put your knowledge to account by enlightening me on that question and explaining the apparent irrationality of such conduct."

"Permit me, Mr. President, to solicit the testimony of the medium. Señorita, overcoming your natural timidity, kindly inform these gentlemen whether there has been any element of concupiscence in our relationship. Mr. President, I have been impelled to make these experiments exclusively for their scientific interest, with no other consideration whatsoever. I visited that place because I had heard of this young lady. I

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wanted to know her and if possible to guide her into another and more perfect sphere. Señorita, did I not propose to rescue you?"

"To pay off my debt? Señor Veguillas was the one that kept on that tack all night."

"Señorita Guadalupe, you will remember that in a fatherly way I proposed your accompanying me in my peregrination along the Path."

"You wanted to put me on the stage!"

"In order to demonstrate to the incredulous the occult Demiurgic powers which lie latent in human clay. You rejected my offer and I was reluctantly obliged to retire and swallow my defeat. Mr. President, I believe I have dissipated all doubt regarding the impeccability of my conduct. In Europe the most prominent scientific men are studying these cases. Mesmerism has today reached its greatest development in German universities."

"You will have the kindness to go over step by step the experiments which you carried out upon this girl last night."

"At your orders, Mr. President. I repeat that I can lay before you a select program of similar experiments."

"The girl will be examined first in consideration of her sex. Don Nacho Veguillas affirms as self-evident that in a certain circumstance his thoughts were subtracted from him through the magnetic influence of the accused."

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The harlot lowered her eyes to the false jewels which adorned her hands:

"If I possessed any such powers as that, I wouldn't be slaving to pay off my debt to Cucarachita. Señor Veguillas, you know that."

"Lupita, to me you have been a hypnotic serpent."

"And you accuse me of that after I went and gave you a dose of ammonia!"

"Lupita, you'll confess that last night you were in a state of hypnotic hysteria. You read my thoughts when that ass of a Domiciano was carousing amongst the dancers. You tipped him off to make his getaway."

"But, Señor Veguillas, the two of you were dead drunk! All I wanted was to get you both out of the room."

"Lupita, you divined what I was thinking. Lupita, you're in communion with the spirits. Do you deny that you turned out to be a medium when the Polish Professor put you in a trance?"

"In effect, this young woman is a very remarkable case of hypnotic lucidity. In order that the distinguished assembly may the better appreciate the phenomena, the medium will occupy a chair in the center of the room under the light. Señorita, be so kind."

He took her by the hand and ceremoniously conducted her to the middle of the room. With downcast eyes and modest air she walked on tip-toe, sup-

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ported by the Polish professor, scarcely resting her finger-tips on his white glove:

"Chack! Chack!"

IV

The humorous grimace of the Indian mummy looked greenly senile. From his dress coat the Polish Professor extracted a magic wand, forged of seven different metals, and touched Lupita's eyelids with it. He finished up with a grand bow, saluting with the magic wand. Sighing, the harlot fell into a trance. Veguillas, kneeling in the corner, awaited the miracle. The light of his innocence was about to shine forth. At that moment Lupita and the mountebank filled his soul with all the awe of a divine revelation. Obscurely he hoped through those mysteries to be restored to the Tyrant's grace. He shuddered. The green grimace bit into the rusty silence:

"Chack! Chack! You'll have the kindness to repeat step by step, as I believe I have already said, the experiments which you carried out last night upon the defendant."

"Mr. President, the telepathic vision adopts three forms with respect to time: Past, Present and Future. This triple phenomenon is rarely found complete in one medium. It appears dispersed. In the Señorita Guadalupe the telepathic potentiality does not extend beyond the sphere of the Present. The Past and the

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Future are sealed doors to her. And within the phenomena of her telepathic vision, the most recent event represents a remote past. This medium is absolutely unable to repeat a former experiment. Absolutely unable! This girl is only a slightly developed medium. A diamond in the rough! Mr. President, I shall be happy to place at your disposal a select program of demonstrations as similar as possible to those in question."

A tart grimace puckered the Tyrant's mask:

"Doctor, don't try to get out of satisfying the desire I have expressed to you. I want you to repeat one by one all the experiments you carried out last night in the brothel."

"Mr. President, I can only repeat similar experiments. The medium cannot attain retrospective sight. She is a very limited seer. She can read your thoughts, witness a distant happening, or divine any number which you will be kind enough to think of, Mr. President."

"And with all those circus tricks she prostitutes herself in a house of ill fame?"

"The great hysteric neurosis of modern science might explain all that. Señorita, the President will have the kindness to keep some number in mind. You will take his hand and tell us the number in a voice loud enough for all to hear. Speak very loud and clearly, Señorita."

"Seven!"

"Like seven daggers. Chack! Chack!"

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Nachito whined from his place of banishment:

"With that same trick you divined my thoughts yesterday!"

Tyrant Banderas turned to him, amused and vinegary:

"Why do you go to such low dens, old man?"

"General, the fact that man is fragile has even been set to music."

Retiring into his look of taciturnity, the Tyrant fixed his gaze upon the strumpet with distrustful insistence. The combs fell from her hair as she lolled in the chair, and the knot uncoiled like a black cobra. Tyrant Banderas rejoined the group of his comrades:

"When we were youngsters we used to see such miracles for a few pennies. So many diplomas, so many ribbons, and so little capacity! I am beginning to think you're an impostor and I'm going to give orders to have that German scholar's mane of yours shaved off. You have no right to wear it."

"Mr. President, I am a foreigner who has taken refuge in his exile under the banner of this noble Republic. I teach the truth to the masses and lead them away from materialistic positivism. Through my few demonstrations, the proletariat acquires a tangible notion of a supernatural world. The life of the masses is ennobled when they glimpse the abysm of mystery."

"Don Cruz, as a reward for his pretty speeches you'll shave only half his head."

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The Tyrant mouthed his grimace with acid humor as, suspended in the black cluster of his fingers, the barber held out to him a mass of wool:

"Master, it's a wig!"

V

The prostitute began to emerge from the trance, sighing, and approached the frontiers of the world with livid wonder. Perched on the pinnacle of the ladder, the Indian mummy trained his telescope upon the city. The wild-eyed blinking of the lanterns rocked to a clamorous tumult of gun-powder, fires, and bells, with an imperative blaring of bugles:

"Chack! Chack! Here comes a scuffle! Don Cruz, go get my military trappings ready."

The sentry in the tower pulls his bayonet out of the moon and fires his musket at the darkness replete with alarms. The cathedral clock broadcasts the sonorous cycle of its twelve strokes, and from the ladder the Tyrant issues his orders:

"Major del Valle, take a few men, reconnoitre the field and find out what barracks those volleys are coming from."

As Major del Valle was leaving the room the servant came capering in with mincing graces, bearing a uniform on a tray in his outstretched arms, and across it, the sword of his General Banderas. The pair fell headlong and the sword bounded clattering over the floor.

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The Tyrant, up in arms, shrill and irate, stamped his foot, making both ladder and telescope tremble:

"Idiots! Don't either of you touch it! Here's a pretty omen! What enigma can you decipher in this, Professor Magician?"

The mountebank took in the scene. There before him, in gleaming suspense, were the lighted room, the frightened faces, the Tyrant's grim superstition. He saluted:

"In these circumstances it is impossible for me to formulate an oracle."

"And this virtuous damsel who on other occasions has shown such remarkable penetration, can't she give us some information about this tumult in Sante Fe? Professor, kindly hypnotize the medium and interrogate her. I shall retire to put on my uniform. Don't any of you touch my sword!"

A precipitate clatter of arms rolled along the moonlit cloister. Reserves were rushing to reinforce the guard. The prostitute sat sighing under the hypnotic passes of the bald mountebank, the whites of her eyes turned upon the mystery:

"Señorita, what do you see?"

VI

The cathedral clock falls silent. The twelve strokes still hang suspended in the air and the cocks on the weather-vanes prick up their crests. The cats hold

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consultations on the roofs and white-robed figures lean out of attic windows. The nuns' bell has gone crazy. A drove of bulls stampedes along the Arquillo, and the leaders, in flight, jangle their cattle-bells. Explosions of gun-powder. A martial blaring of cornets. A troop of nuns, hairless and clad only in chemises, scurry with prayers and cries to the profaned door of the convent. From remote districts come gusts of musket-fire. Rearing horses. Tumults and panic clamor. Opposing tides of fleeing crowds. The tigers, escaped from their cages, ramp with blazing eyes around the corners of the houses. Along a roof white with moonlight, two fugitive shadows are dragging a black piano. Behind them an open scuttle belches geysers of smoke amid red tongues of flame. With their garments ablaze, the two shadows race hand in hand along the roof-ledge, and hand in hand fling themselves to the street. And the moon, blindfolded with a cloud, plays with the stars at blind-man's buff over the turbulent Santa Fe de Tierra Firme.

VII

Lupita the Romantic sighs in the hypnotic trance, the whites of her eyes still turned upon the mystery.

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EPILOGUE

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EPILOGUE

I

"CHACK! CHACK!"

The Tyrant, wary and distrustful, keeps vigil over the defenses, orders fagots prepared and parapets constructed, visits ramparts and trenches, issues commands.

"Chack! Chack!"

Infuriated by the listless attitude of the guerillas, he vows dire punishment for cowards and traitors. He is exasperated over the collapse of his first plan, which had been to fall upon the revolting city and with a bloody chastisement make an example of it. Surrounded by his aides, he retires from the front in taciturn chagrin after haranguing the veteran companies of the vanguard drawn up in the Campo de la Ranita.

"Chack! Chack!"

II

Before dawn he found himself surrounded by the revolutionary factions and the revolting battalions of the Santa Fe barracks. He mounted to the dismantled belfry to study the position and manœuvres of the be-

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sieging forces. Distributed in scattered lines along the twilight avenues, the enemy displayed good military order. They had not yet closed in upon him, occupied as they were in providing the approaches with parallels and trenches. Tyrant Banderas, observing his danger, compressed his green grimace. Two wily females were clawing up the earth round about an Indian who was buried up to his hips in the convent yard:

"Those two wenches already give me up for lost. Sentry, what are you doing, you damned fool?"

The sentry slowly leveled his musket in their direction:

"They're in a bad position to get an aim."

"Put a bullet into that bastard and let them divide up his hide between them."

The sentry fired, and shooting broke out in all the length of the front lines. The two women lay in a heap beside the Indian, enveloped in the smoke of gunpowder, in the terrorized silence which followed upon the gust of lead. And the Indian, with a bullet hole in his head, waved his arms, bidding adieu to the last stars. The General:

"Chack! Chack!"

III

At the first assault the soldiers of the advance guard deserted as the Tyrant looked on from the tower:

"Hell fire! I knew you'd fail me at the crucial mo-

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ment! Don Cruz, you're turning out to be a prophet."

This observation referred to the fact that the barber had frequently whispered in his ear tales of treachery. In the meantime the vanguards never ceased their firing. The insurgents were intent upon tightening the blockade in order to frustrate any attempt at a sortie by the beleaguered garrison. They had mounted their cannon in battery, but before opening fire, Colonel de la Gándara, mounted on a lively steed, rode out of the ranks. Galloping over the battlefield at the risk of his life, he shouted a demand for surrender. The Tyrant rained insults upon him from the tower:

"You bastard buccaneer! I'll have you shot through the back!"

Thrusting out his head above the soldiers lined up at the base of the tower, he ordered them to open fire. They obeyed, but aimed so high it was obviously their intention to cause no casualties:

"You're aiming at the stars, you damned scoundrels!"

At this, Major del Valle, galloping out farther than was necessary for the purpose of defense, passed over to the enemy. The Tyrant shouted:

"Only serpents have I warmed in my bosom!"

And giving orders to lock up the entire garrison in the monastery, he left the tower. He asked the barber for a list of suspects and ordered fifteen of them hanged, hoping with so exemplary a punishment to check the desertions:

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"Perhaps God thinks a handful of idiots can make me bite the dust, but He has reckoned without His host!"

He planned to resist all day and to attempt a sortie under cover of night.

IV

About the middle of the morning the rebellious factions had begun their cannon fire and in a short while had opened breaches for the assault. Tyrant Banderas attempted to defend the gaps, but his troops deserted. He was forced to shut himself up again in the barracks. Then, giving himself up for lost, finding himself abandoned by all but his barber, he unbuckled his pistol belt and, drooling green poisons, handed it over to him:

"Our harmony-loving friend had better accompany us in our journey to hell!"

With his customary gait of an inquisitive rat, he mounted to the chamber where his daughter was secluded. On opening the door he heard her demented cries:

"Daughter, you weren't fit to marry and become a grand lady, as this poor sinner had hoped, and he now finds himself forced to take the life that he gave you twenty years ago! It's not right that you remain in this world for your father's enemies to enjoy you and

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affront you by calling you the daughter of that bastard Banderas!"

Hearing this, the maidservants in charge of the lunatic began frantically to implore mercy. Tyrant Banderas struck them in the face:

"Take that, you damned sluts! If I spare your life it's so you can lay her out for me like an angel!"

He drew a dagger from his breast, took his daughter firmly by the hair and closed his eyes. A memorial of the rebels states that he hacked her with fifteen thrusts.

V

Tyrant Banderas went to the window, brandishing the dagger, and dropped, riddled with bullets. His head, sentenced to be exposed to public scorn, was exhibited for three days on a scaffold draped with yellow buntings in the Plaza de Armas. The same edict ordered the trunk to be quartered and the pieces distributed from frontier to frontier, from sea to sea. Zamalpoa and Nueva Cartagena, Puerto Colorado and Santa Rosa del Titipay were the favored cities.

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